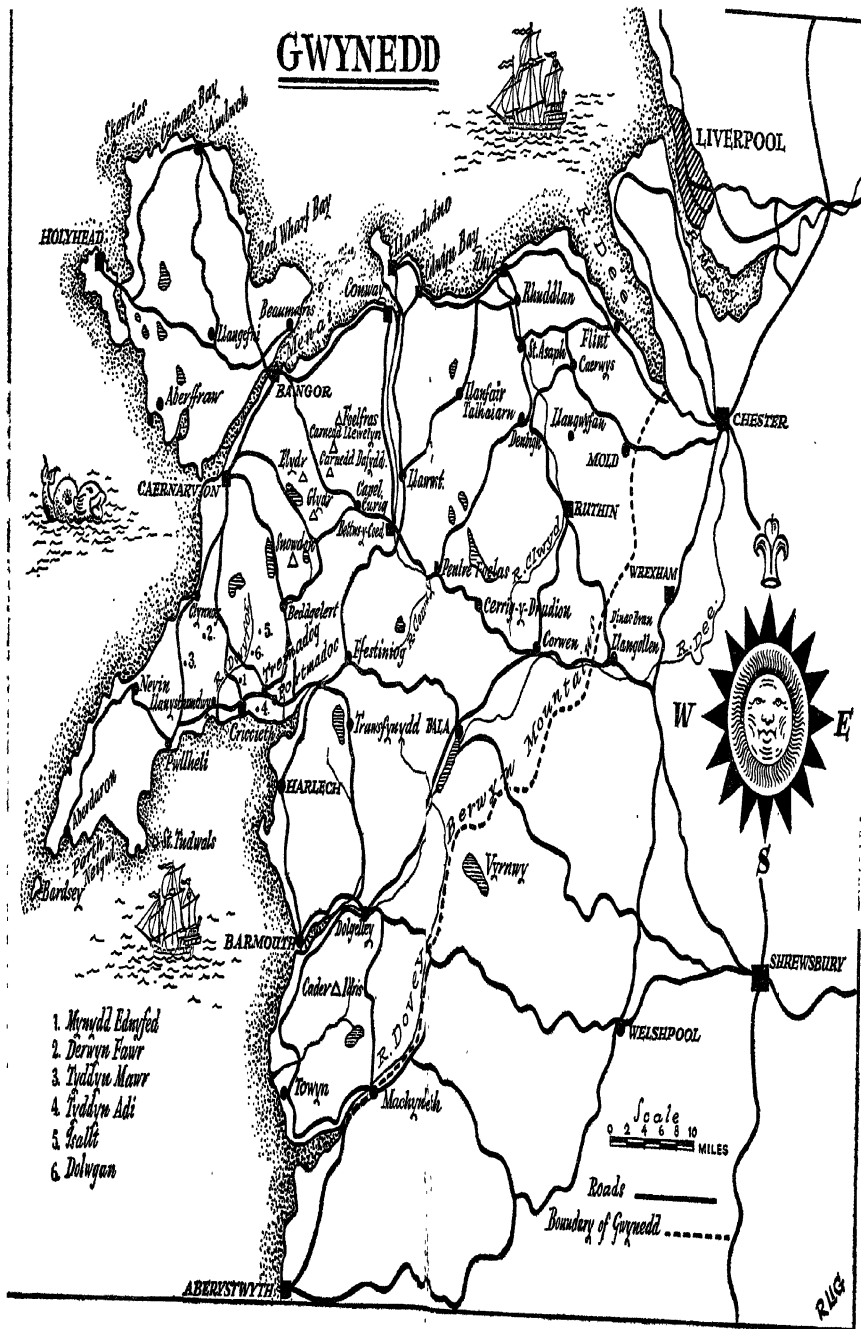




# GWYNEDD





## DAME MARGARET





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DAME MARGARET LLOYD GEORGE

G.B.E., LL.D , J.P , ETC.

# DAME MARGARET

## The Life Story of His Mother

by

VISCOUNT GWYNEDD

(Now EARL LLOYD GEORGE of DWYFOR)



GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD.

Museum Street, London

First published in 1947

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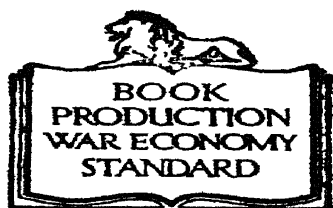
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*Melus gof*  
*M. E. LL. G.*

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

THERE is no preface to this book, the one I should have liked to ask to write it has long ago passed beyond our reach. He knew her for the queen she was and could have expressed it in words of poetry and music, which would have made my clumsy effort seem indeed poor. The book has been written through the second great war of my lifetime, through blitz and bombing, and this is one of my excuses for its disjointedness. I mean it wholeheartedly as a son's tribute to a mother such as few have been so fortunate as to have.

All her grandsons are now fighting on sea and land and in the air, and fighting for what she held most precious—common decency.

Very many kind friends have been of great assistance to me in the preparation of this book, so many in fact that I cannot hope to enumerate them all. I acknowledge here their kindness and the trouble they have taken to help me. The old Welsh sayings and proverbs, one of which I have placed at the head of each chapter, have been taken from the collection by Henry Vaughan, sometime Regius Professor of History at Oxford in the last century.

There is no definite chronological order and I apologize beforehand for my dates. If the reader considers that some event took place in, say, 1913 and not in 1911, he is probably right, not me. I remember once doing a paper in history. I entered the examination room with the dates of that wretched period buzzing like a swarm of bees in my head. My next-door neighbour sat down and carefully laid his boxwood rule between us. I glanced at it and saw the usual twelve inches marked. The papers were distributed and we were off. The master took up his commanding position and my neighbour picked up his rule and carefully drew a line under his name. He laid the rule down. It was beautifully polished and the outstanding dates of the period in question were staring at me in minute but legible handwriting. What a gentleman!

LLANGWYFAN,

St. David's Day, 1945.

THIS further note is necessary because I feel that my own thanks are due to the publishers and printers for their kindness and forbearance in agreeing, at my request, to the postponement of the publication of this book for a twelvemonth after completion.

I consider that in honour to my mother's memory, I have a right to explain the reasons.

This book was ready for publication in February 1945, and a great number of my friends and fellow countrymen knew of its impending appearance. My father died on March 26th. I was in hospital myself with a serious illness and had no knowledge of his real condition. Now, of course, I realize the full history of his fatal illness, and the cause of his failing powers, which were so apparent.

I feel sure the malady had started its dread work before my mother's death. I had not seen him for some time and I noticed on the day of her funeral a great physical change.

She had been a tower of strength to him both in the early days of struggle and in the period of steady climb to power.

All who knew them well in those pre-Budget days will agree with me that she made him—made him by steadfastness and not by personal ambition.

Unhappy family disputes followed the publication of the main terms of his various wills and the codicils. Although I was the heir to the title I had no knowledge of his intention of accepting any honour in the New Year's list. In fact the first intimation I had when in hospital was in the Press on the morning of the First of January.

Luckily he allowed me to choose the second title, Viscount Gwynedd, which appears on the cover of this book. I have not altered it because it was actually my correct designation at the time and also because it seems to me to be a more appropriate name for the author of a book about my mother.

Gwynedd was to my mother her earthly paradise, she loved its language, its people, its scenery; so, although it was supremely unnecessary, as this peerage has been conferred, nothing would have given her greater pleasure than my son's title—curiously

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

enough his name is Owen, so, after a lapse of 800 years, Owen Gwynedd comes into his own again.

Therefore it may seem necessary to explain to readers why I refer to my father in the present tense—he *was* with us when I wrote this book. I hope some day to write his story as it was unfolded before my eyes, but with present-day difficulties and the restrictions on publishers for the supply of paper, this is a task beyond me at the moment.

In reality it is meet that neither my mother nor my father should have survived to see our “brave new world,” where the sacrifice of millions of young lives seems to have been in vain.

The totalitarian madness and the crucifying of the liberty of the common man, against which they fought and died, we see now being re-enthroned and re-enacted. In this country, the Liberal party, for which my parents worked and toiled for so many long years, although they were both old-time Radicals, is now reduced to a skeleton force which Mr. Churchill in his characteristically telling phrase described as “so few and so futile.” The one-time Labour Party of Keir Hardy, Mabon, and many another stalwart, are now proudly brandishing the cold, bloodless hands of smothering bureaucrats.

From whatever Valhalla my mother and father may be looking down on the sad scene, I can imagine them crying to us—“Be of good cheer—and lift thine eyes unto the hills whence comes thy strength.”

But this is a portrait of a gentil ladye of olden time.

CRICCIETH,

St. David's Day, 1946.



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# PART ONE: THE FRAME

## CHAPTER I

*Tri pheth a ddylai bardd eu  
cynnal; yr iaith Gymraeg, y  
prif-farddonuaeth, a chaf am  
bob daionus a rhagor.*

BARDIC.

What Ancients teach;  
The Cymric speech;  
All memories of the good and great;  
These three must bards perpetuate.

"TUT, tut, *Dic bach!* What do you think you are doing? Really! Isn't one writer in the family quite enough?"

This (as nearly as the Welsh idiom can be translated) is what my mother would undoubtedly say if she were alive and got wind of what I am up to. But belying the disapproval of her words there would most certainly be more than a hint of laughter in her grey-blue eyes. For no one would be quicker to see the comical incongruity of my attempting to be her Boswell. And anything comical appealed tremendously to her.

Having said this, is it necessary to add that I have no illusions about my capabilities as a writer of distinction? Here is no formal biography of Dame Margaret Lloyd George. It is a humble tribute from her first-born to the greatest, most lovable, most humorous woman whom I ever met in the course of my life. If admittedly the task calls for a far more skilful pen than mine, if indeed to do her memory justice the grace and beauty of a Homeric poem might be inadequate, the obvious and relevant fact of my peculiar fitness remains. Not only because I was her eldest child, a variety of reasons account for my having been for nearly half a century her closest companion, except at such times as I was abroad on foreign service. And of these many reasons not the least, perhaps, is my unshakable conviction that since the dawn of time no man ever had a more wonderful mother than mine.

Another factor accounting for the intimacy of our relations is my proficiency in Welsh. I am the only one of her children who had an opportunity of studying the language at school. And because my mother's love of her country was passionate, it is but natural that my knowledge of the native tongue should have played an important part in our interchange of confidences.

I am not unmindful of the dangers which beset my path. In what I shall have to say I shall strive mightily to avoid the pitfalls of commission and omission, so easy and so natural to slip into when great affection is coupled with veneration for the dead. I shall do my poor best to keep uppermost in mind what Boswell set down as a guiding principle:

“If the biographer writes from personal knowledge, and makes haste to gratify the public curiosity, there is danger lest his interest, his fear, his gratitude, or his tenderness, overpower his fidelity, and tempt him to conceal, if not to invent. There are many who think it an act of piety to hide the faults or failings of their friends, even when they can no longer suffer by their defection; we therefore see whole ranks of characters adorned with uniform panegyric and not to be known from one another but by extrinsic and casual circumstances. . . . If we owe regard to the memory of the dead there is yet more respect to be paid to knowledge, to virtue, and to truth.”

Rigidly to conform to this Boswellian precept, I shall not try to minimize the flaming resentment that seethed within me (a resentment that raged no less fiercely in my father and in my second sister) as a result of my mother's unyielding insistence on our all wearing woollen underwear. This resentment was not shared by my brother and my two other sisters, but I am quite sure it would have made no difference to my mother if we had all confronted her with a united demand to be allowed to wear what we chose next to our skin. No difference, did I say? I am wrong. It would have served merely to make her more than ever adamant. Not only had she the courage of her convictions, she had that kind of strength of character which grows the greater by the very waxing of opposition to her will. Among the many qualities which justify my assertion that my mother was a great lady was her absolute, magnificent fearlessness.

At the same time, however paradoxical it may appear, she was a great comic. No other woman, except her own mother, and very few men of my acquaintance have ever given evidence of possessing a sense of humour as impish as hers. Indeed, even as I make the statement I can see much raising of eyebrows and vigorous shaking of heads by those who truly believe they knew my mother. That this should be so is not surprising. Subtlety

was the essence of her wit. Masking it was an essential part of the quiet fun which only she could extract from what others with a less lively sense of humour counted prosy.

Here again, like Boswell, I find apposite a quotation from Plutarch, "the prince of ancient biographers":

"Nor is it always in the most distinguished achievements that men's virtues or vices may be best discerned; but very often an action of small note, a short saying or a jest, shall distinguish a person's real character more than the greatest sieges, or the most important battles."

By this I would not have it thought I am unappreciative of those many *distinguished achievements* for which a grateful people have done her honour and which will be long remembered. I am animated by a desire to paint a picture of the woman as she was, not to add another lifeless, idealized statue to a world of such unconvincing memorials as now affront the eyes of truth-seekers. It is for this reason I stress her sense of humour.

Finally, in my earnest endeavour to make it plain at the outset that my veneration and affection will not lead me into the error of making this a eulogistic monotone, I cull a quotation from Doctor Samuel Johnson himself:

"The business of the biographer is often to pass slightly over those performances and incidents which produce vulgar greatness, to lead the thoughts into domestic privacies, and display the minute details of daily life, where exterior appendages are cast aside, and men excel each other only by prudence and by virtue . . . but biography has often been allotted to writers who seem very little acquainted with the nature of their task, or very negligent about the performance . . . more knowledge may be gained of a man's real character by a short conversation with one of his servants, than from a formal and studied narrative, begun with his pedigree and ended with his funeral."

Of my mother's funeral, and of her servants, I shall have not a little to tell. But the telling will be as nearly as I am capable of reproducing it in her own fashion, inimitable as I confess that to be. Indeed, I find myself wondering if perhaps my sorrow and sense of loss when death took her from me were not made the more poignant by a realization that I can never have from her

own lips a recital of the inspiring story of her funeral. She would have told it so much more beautifully than I can do.

All the stories she told were told beautifully. They were filled with predictions of fair days to come, and when the event proved her wrong I loved her none the less for that. I have reason to believe that now and again she was guilty of a piously fraudulent account of some bygone episode, but these were white lies that made the hearer happy. Indeed, happiness had its abode in her dear face and her tender Welsh tongue. Intrinsically, she was light of heart, gay her merry eyes.

Tragedy touched her life, of course. Only heroines of fiction live a life of song and laughter. But over each such trial she rose triumphant, her deep-rooted faith in God's goodness undimmed. She had as little patience as have I with those who point to tribulations bravely borne as proof of greatness of character. To her way of thinking this was tantamount to applauding a person for not grumbling or whining when things don't go his way.

One must, however, take into consideration the conventional outlook of the vast majority. Viewed from this angle, one of the most touching tributes ever paid to my mother's memory was voiced by the little, old grave-digger who hacked away the ice beneath the snow that covered the family vault in the cemetery at Criccieth the day before her funeral. A passer-by of an obviously inquiring type of mind asked the labourer what he considered would be a fitting epitaph for Dame Margaret Lloyd George.

For a space the grave-digger pondered the matter. Then, reverently and simply, he made answer, "She bore her troubles like a great lady."

Doubtless there are thousands of good folk who loved my mother during her lifetime who will say a more fitting epitaph could not be coined. With all respect to their opinion, and with full appreciation of the sincerity of that grave-digger, I say such stressing of her fortitude would be abhorrent to her, quite as it is out of all proportion to the sum total of her life. No one who knew her will dispute the truth inherent in that epitaph; its fault is its inadequacy. Not "She bore her troubles like" but merely "She *was* a great lady" seems to me a more fitting summing up of her character. Happily, those most nearly concerned were agreed that no epitaph of any kind was wanted.

Although almost one-half of her long life was spent in un-

interrupted domicile in Caernarvonshire and during the reign of Queen Victoria—two facts so closely co-related as to seem to have had a tremendous effect upon her outlook—she was untouched by the insular narrow-mindedness of the one or the inflexible rules of conventionality of the other. The poet who found women “capricious, coy, and hard to please”—in that period the generally accepted attributes of the conventionally correct maiden—would have found my mother most unwomanly. Neither did she function overmuch as “a ministering angel,” if and when our brows were racked. I like to believe it was her sense of humour which made her know instinctively that both these rôles were at bottom nothing more than play-acting.

In her home as in the outside world she was the soul of sincerity, and thus perforce a realist. But this is not to say that down through the three-score years of her adult life there were not scattered countless thousand fragments of kindly, womanly tact. An example comes into my mind. I set it down as my mother told it to me.

“It was when we were in residence at 11 Downing Street,” she said. “One morning Sir Herbert Samuel was announced. I was with your father in the dining-room and he asked me not to leave. So I stayed—in a far corner, reading the morning newspaper. What it may have been that Sir Herbert wanted to talk over with your father I have no idea. All I know is that hour after hour they continued to talk. When at last they paused for breath there remained only a few minutes before luncheon would be announced. At that point, to my dismay, I heard your father invite Sir Herbert to stay and lunch with us. Fortunately, Sir Herbert was sitting back to me. Unseen by him, I waved my arms about and shook my head in protest. Naturally your father was bewildered by what must have seemed to him most inhospitable behaviour on my part, but as always he was quick to take a hint.

“‘If not today,’ he said, ‘one day soon, Herbert.’”

“When he re-entered the room alone he gave me a piercing look. ‘What in heaven’s name, Maggie, was that wig-wagging about?’ he said.

“‘Nothing much,’ I said. ‘It’s only that we have nothing but roast pork for luncheon.’”

However I shake the kaleidoscope of my disjointed memory

there comes into view instance after instance of her supreme tactfulness. For the benefit of those small-minded ones who impregnate tact with an underlying taint of insincerity I make haste to declare it was bigness of heart, innate kindness, that prompted my mother in these matters. I recall vividly a day forty-odd years ago when I came home from school in London. At table my mother saw that I only pecked at the food set before me.

"Why aren't you eating?" she said. "What's wrong?"

I mumbled an excuse, and made a pretence of clearing my plate, but I did not fool her. It was not, however, until later when I was alone with her that I realized this. With characteristic directness she told me she knew something was wrong with me and insisted on my telling her what it was. In vain I protested there was nothing wrong. My boyish pride made me tight-lipped, stubborn. But in the end I had to blurt out the truth. My life at school had been made a nightmare. For weeks I had been tortured by the other boys. I not only didn't want to eat; I didn't want to live!

Of course, at the time I did not appreciate it, but as I look back on that incident from this distance I realize with what wonderful tact she handled me. I am still not certain whether it was sheer maternal instinct or, as is more probable, her keen mind that enabled her to put her finger on the seat of my trouble. And—which is even more unusual—having satisfied herself as to the reason for my persecution, she fully understood my disinclination to discuss it. Even then, young as I was, I was dumbly grateful to her for not making me confess.

"It's because your father is pro-Boer. That's it," she said. And I knew by the way she said it she was greatly relieved. Had I been guilty of some infraction of the school code, had it been something of my own doing that had made my schoolmates turn on me, I am certain my mother would have let me continue to suffer until I had expiated the crime. But this was different.

"It's not good enough," she said. Then, quietly, "I'll not have it."

No waste of words. No mollycoddling. No hysteria. Just calm decisiveness. And so great was the force of her personality I knew instantly my troubles were at an end. How she would work the miracle I had no notion, but I did know she would find a way. This conviction was swiftly followed by a discovery that I was ravenously hungry!

To this day I am ignorant of what my mother said to my father on that occasion. All I know is that at the end of the holidays I found myself in Criccieth and in another school; my new school-mates willing to judge me by my own behaviour irrespective of my father's pro-Boer sympathies.

Another facet of my mother's character, sufficiently noteworthy to find inclusion in this initial outline of the woman as she was, was her consistent refusal ever to favour extremism. Whatever she may have thought of the Suffragette movement, for instance, she herself took no part in it. If this appears not to square with my statement that she had the courage of her convictions, it is only a seeming contradiction. Between right and wrong—in *the abstract*—she was uncompromising. Political isms, however, seemed to her to be as transitory and of as little importance as women's fashions. True, she held local political office. Criccieth never knew a better chairman of the Town Council. But in that office, as throughout her whole life, she functioned as a humanitarian, not a politician.

It is said—and truly said—she had the dignity, the poise of a queen. Whether in her capacity as hostess to the Great Personages who came from the ends of the world to the Court of St. James's, or as an honoured guest in the White House in Washington, she proved herself worthy of her princely forbears. And from such associations she could—and did—return to the little town that was her birthplace to gladden the hearts of all those with whom she stopped to pass the time of day. Whether as *The Tiger*, or as the great war leader of a nation fighting for its life, Clemenceau, in my mother's level eyes, was just a grand old man of marvellous vitality and indomitable will. Rank and titles meant less than nothing to her. All that interested her was the character of the men and women who crossed her crowded path.

Serenity such as is popularly ascribed to a monarch on his throne was my mother's birthright. Only on rare occasions was her tranquillity so much as ruffled. All the more terrifying, therefore, was the change that transformed her when the light of righteous anger flamed in her eyes. Like her father before her, she was slow to anger; but once aroused, once she had her quarrel just, she could make the stoutest-hearted evil-doer quail. I know whereof I speak. More than once I earned her disapprobation, and richly deserved the punishment she decided was meet. This



included being turned over her knee as a preliminary to a spanking. All her children were thus chastised as and when they deserved it. And always it was my mother who administered the punishment. To the best of my knowledge, my father never raised his hand to any of us, and the very fact that placidity was the rule in our household made its rare disruption all the more terrifying.

To end this hazy outline which presently I hope to round out with facts that will complete the picture, I deem it important to go on record with the statement that my mother was *not* a good housekeeper. By this I mean only that she did very little of the actual household work. Certain jobs there were which she insisted on doing herself—curing the bacon, feeding her flock of scrawny hens, making treacle toffee—but for the most part she was not enamoured of engaging in humdrum household tasks. Yet I have never known a better-run household, a more bountiful and well-ordered table. The explanation of this seeming paradox is simple. Everyone took delight in being of service to my mother. To wait upon her seemed at the same time the right thing to do—and a privilege! To expect her to ply knitting-needles or knead bread was as unthinkable as putting a Derby winner between the shafts of a farm wagon! This is not to say she was not the mistress of our home. It is not to suggest she was in any particular remiss in the *management* of the household. But there she stopped. Having issued her instructions, she took it for granted they would be duly carried through to perfect completion. And because everyone loved her she never suffered disappointment at the hands of those who served her.

From first to last my mother must have engaged at least a score of servants. Not one ever left her service except to get married—and then only with the greatest reluctance. Can this be truthfully said of any other woman who lived to celebrate her Golden Wedding anniversary? I wonder!

## CHAPTER II

*Cof gan bawb, a gar.*

Whome'er love leads  
Remembrance feeds.

OF all the Welsh sagas (and not even Ireland is richer in colourful folk-lore) that my mother used to tell me as a child, the one that impressed me most had for its moral the tragic consequences of impetuous jumping to conclusions coupled with the rashness of acting on impulse. Setting down the story of Gelert here will undoubtedly arouse my Welsh readers to derision. In Wales it is a tale as oft-told and hoary as, say, the Father Christmas legend. But beyond the borders of the Principality it is not so well known. And if one is to know my mother it is essential to know something of the country and its folk-lore which she loved so dearly. Another reason, no less impelling, is my contempt for the tendency of a school of writers to indulge in what they glibly call *debunking*. Only a short time ago one such scribbler went on record with the flat assertion that the legend was unknown in Beddgelert until the end of the eighteenth century, and was then invented by a cunning innkeeper with a lively sense of the value of publicity. Even if this were true, I count such destructiveness as contemptible as the meanness of those who spoil a child's belief in Santa Claus. At any rate, here is the story as my mother told it to her children.

Once upon a time King John wished to do a kindness to his son-in-law, Llewelyn the Great. So he made him a gift, a faithful wolf-hound named Gelert, an already proved great hunting dog. And Gelert was much beloved by its master. And the dog's devotion and loyalty to its master knew no bounds. Together they hunted through the mountains of Caernarvonshire, stalking game. And Llewelyn had never to worry if his aim were bad or the quarry too elusive for him to bring it down himself. There was always Gelert to make the kill. And so over the years there grew a great love between man and dog.

When a child was born to him, however, Llewelyn found an even more important task for Gelert to perform. In those far-off days ferocious wolves roamed the countryside. To protect the infant from this ever-present danger, Gelert had to mount guard in the hunting lodge while its master fared forth alone on his

quest for venison. And because of its unquestioning fealty the dog was as reliable a guard as it had been a mighty hunter. The infant son of the prince was as safe as he would have been in the heart of a moated castle, protected by a regiment of men-at-arms.

But one day on his return from the chase Llewelyn saw to his horror Gelert's coat was covered with blood. Dashing past the dog he rushed into the hunting lodge, where the sight that met his eyes confirmed his fears. The room was a shambles. Chairs and tables and—worst of all—the cradle, were overturned and splashed with blood. Maddened by the thought that the hound had killed the baby, he drew his sword and ran it through the body of the tail-wagging Gelert.

It was not until the prince heard a plaintive cry from beneath the overturned cradle that he discovered his son, in no way hurt, lying beside the lacerated body of the wolf which Gelert had killed. It was the wolf's blood—and Gelert's—with which the room was bespattered; it was Gelert's mighty prowess that had saved his baby's life.

Of course, Prince Llewelyn could not undo what he had done. But to make atonement for his unwitting wickedness he gave the hound a stately funeral, and erected over the last resting-place of the great-hearted animal the tomb which to this day is a hallowed spot, visited by pilgrims to whom it is to be hoped the moral of the legend strikes deeply home.

And to this day and so long as there is a Wales, Beddgelert—literally the Welsh for Gelert's Grave—is and will be a shrine at which animal lovers from every corner of the earth pay homage to a noble specimen of that breed of four-footed creatures so truly called man's most faithful friend.

In telling her children such legends, my mother was doing only what generations of Welsh mothers down through the centuries had done before her. At a time when the world—that part of it not actually engaged in fighting against its would-be destroyers—is talking much about post-war reconstruction, and is especially concerned about improving former methods and scope of education for the masses, I consider the deep-rooted Welsh system of *home* tuition is definitely topical. "Book learning" is all very well in its way, attendance at school is not to be dismissed as a waste of time, but I subscribe wholeheartedly to the theory that second only to experience the best teachers are wise parents. At any

rate, in my own case, the most valuable lessons I ever learned were taught me by my mother and father.

Today, with aviation reducing continents and oceans to mere pastures and ponds, with our horizons widened by talk about global war and our ears becoming familiar with the sound of Russian place-names, the land of my birth seems more than ever tiny. On even a large-scale map, Wales is seen to be an almost inappreciable part of England, its area in fact being less than one-seventh that of its neighbour. (For the benefit of my American friends, Wales is about the size of New Jersey or Massachusetts.) Mere size means nothing, of course, nor will I accept as a satisfactory explanation the oft-made statement that Wales remains the least well known of the four nations constituting the United Kingdom because she is the smallest. I like to believe all Welsh children learn from their mothers what I learned from mine—that boastfulness and self-conceit are twin horrors to be shunned as one spurns all vain-glory—and so when we are away from home in other lands we do not strike an attitude and proclaim belligerently that we are Welsh “and proud of it.” *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* is not for us. *Cymru am Byth* is our motto. It is enough for us to know how proud we are without bombastically trumpeting the fact to all and sundry.

Small, geographically, as is Wales, it is still large enough to be divided into two ethnological parts. Of the two million inhabitants, roughly one-half are Celtic, the other half Iberian, the former blue-eyed, fair-haired people of good average height, the latter swarthy-skinned, black-haired Latins of small stature. No less striking is the difference between the agricultural North and the industrial South, a difference at once regrettable and understandable. Except for its never having found expression in civil war, this difference is on all fours with the gulf that still exists in America between those North and South of the Mason and Dixon line.

What my mother taught her children was what almost all Welsh parents traditionally impart to their offspring. So from her I early learned that we are the most ancient of England's allies. At Crécy and at Agincourt it was the Welsh long-bow in the skilled hands of thousands of Welsh archers which went far towards winning victories against the French. And when the English sought to conquer Wales they encountered the stiffest

opposition ever to confound a puissant foe. Indeed, the final outcome of that attempt to conquer Wales was the putting on the throne of England the first Tudor King—Henry VII—a Welshman!

Another thing that I learned at my mother's knee (about which the world at large is altogether ignorant) is the fact that the rightful name is not Wales at all; the Welshman is in reality a Brython (*anglice* Briton). It was my ancestors who, following five centuries of Roman occupation of their land, next had to face invasion by Teutonic hordes. Forced to withdraw before the onsets of the marauding Saxons, waging a valiant losing battle, the Britons gradually gave up the towns and plains which they could not defend and retired westward into the mountain fortresses that form the Wales of today.

Now these Teutons, quite like the twentieth-century Prussians, were in no doubt about their superiority over all foreigners. And *Welsh* is the Saxon word for foreigner! The German hordes in the last war marched to battle to the cry of "*Wir kämpfen die Welsh*" (We are going to fight the Welsh). Thus, in olden days, when they overran Italy they named that country *Walschland*. The Bulgarians became *Wlochi*, and the Celts of Flanders were renamed Walloons. All these names are derivatives from the German *waelschen*, meaning to talk nonsense. How typical of the Teuton, this lordly assumption that any language not comprehensible to their ears must be nonsensical!

It was one thing for the invaders thus to call the Britons out of their rightful name; it was something else to make the name stick. For many years the word *Welsh* was not accepted because it was known it meant foreigner. Instead, the embattled Britons in their mountain strongholds called themselves *Cymry*, meaning comrades. And in the beautiful blue hills these Britons lived and multiplied, and never ceased to dream of a day when they should regain their heritage. But the pestilence of war was not to vanish with the final failure of the Teutons to overcome the Britons.

For presently the tribes of Wales found themselves pitted against the Anglo-Norman legions. Along the Welsh border, Englishmen of the Plantagenet Age built a great chain of castles in which they established themselves as Lords of the Marches. Each of these ruthless brigands was in effect the monarch of all he surveyed, each had his own army. And bit by bit the Marcher Lords pene-

trated into Wales itself, and at strategic points established additional strongholds from which to sally forth to battle against the hard-pressed Britons in the hills. How tragic were those times for the hopelessly outnumbered tribes of Wales! Their princes, driven ever higher up the mountain-sides, could do no more than dream of the day when they could rout the invader and lead their people back to the land of their fathers. But before this dreadful ordeal reached its peak there were no fewer than one hundred and forty-three castles in and around the beleaguered country, citadels of the Marcher Lords against whose military might the hard-driven princes and their ill-equipped followers could do nothing.

To ardent, boyish ears this tale of impotent frustration came with pride-dispelling hurt. But in her wisdom my mother spared us no part of the ignominy which our forbears knew. For only so could we feel the resurgent joy that filled those others of less distant days when at long last their turn did come!

My mother used to point to this historic episode as a perfect instance of honest men coming into their own "when thieves fall out." And a better illustration of that hoary maxim I have never heard.

The master of Ludlow Castle, Josse de Dinant, a favourite of Henry I, had to fight not only the Welsh, he had two powerful English enemies, Hugh Mortimer and Walter de Lacy. This last-named captured the castle and massacred its garrison during the absence of Josse de Dinant. But on the return of its rightful master the castle was besieged, and de Lacy foresaw capitulation inevitable unless he could call upon reinforcements from outside. Whereupon he did what in the code of the Marcher Lords was unthinkable. He appealed for help to the Welsh! And they came to the rescue! Led by the Prince of Powys and the Prince of Gwynedd, they annihilated the besiegers. The captured Dinant was imprisoned in his own castle.

When, later, Henry I ordered de Lacy to release Josse and drive the Welsh back over the border, he managed to effect Dinant's escape, but to oust the Welsh warriors took four years of desperate fighting, followed by barefaced bribery, so that even though they retired over the border, it was with the Welsh that the real victory lay.

In after years, in this same Ludlow Castle the Tudors held court and from it ruled Wales. It was here the eldest son of Henry VII, christened Arthur, Prince of Wales, came to hold court, and here was for a time the centre of Welsh political life.

To Ludlow in 1502 Prince Arthur brought his bride, a young Spanish princess, Katherine of Aragon. Within a few months of the wedding the young Prince of Wales died, a death without parallel in its consequences in British history. For had he lived and had Katherine borne him a son, his brother, Henry VIII, would never have ascended the throne! (If this talk of Ludlow and Westminster smacks of things English, let me repeat that the Tudor Kings were Welsh.)

Observant explorers have called attention to the fact that nowhere is there to be found anything except the remnants of Offa's Dyke marking the English-Welsh border, no signposts such as tell the traveller that he is leaving England and entering Scotland. I myself have never heard an official explanation that accounts for this absence of a defined boundary. I am content to take my mother's explanation, told with the mock seriousness that so often veiled her choicest jests.

"It is negative proof of England's recognition of Welsh honesty," she would say. "The English no longer fear invasion—by us!"

True of many other idiomatic expressions, this absurdity is much more subtly humorous in the Welsh tongue than it is in English. I know there are savants who will tell you that Shakespeare *in German* is still Shakespeare, that nothing of sense or sentiment in the teachings of Confucius is lost by translation from Chinese into Occidental languages. This may or may not be so. It is emphatically not the case with my native tongue. However rich the translator's imagery may be, no matter how skilled he may be as a master of the language, Welsh thought can find full expression only in the Welsh idiom.

In my native Caernarvonshire, Welsh is universally spoken, English being the secondary language. In my home, as everywhere in that part of Wales, it was Welsh that came most naturally to our childish lips. English had to be *learned*. And, Hollywood to the contrary notwithstanding, what was true in my boyhood days is still true. If film-struck boys and girls interlard their conversations with "Okay" and "Oh yeah," such abominations are in no way damaging so far as the purity of their native Welsh is concerned. By the least reverent urchin defiling of the language of his ancestors would not be tolerated.

What a glorious vista my mother opened up for us when she explained that we alone of all the inhabitants of the British Isles—

a mere two million out of more than twenty times that number—spoke the same language that King Arthur and his subjects spoke! For Welsh *is* the ancient speech of the Britons. To have it pure and undefiled at this late day is a wonderful thing. For it must be remembered that Latin became the official language in A.D. 43, and for the next four hundred years remained the language of Britain under the Roman rule. Wales as well as England—unlike Scotland and Ireland—was Romanized, but the Welsh clung to the speech of their ancestors through those four centuries just as subsequently they turned a deaf ear to French and English would-be conquerors.

Whether in legend or in authentic history, my mother pointed out, Welsh influence on the English Court was always in evidence. In the former category was Merlin, first of the so-called *Welsh wizards*. Those who know their legendary King Arthur know that Merlin was looked upon as a magician capable of performing miracles. But it is less generally known that he was originally a fatherless waif, wandering about the streets of Carmarthen. At this point my mother would interject a drily humorous comment which tended to make the Arthurian legend seem all the more recent and real. Merlin, she would say, may have been *the first* of the Welsh wizards, but in 1916 the English—in the darkest hour of their history—entrusted their fortunes to the care of a Welshman who himself had lost his father while he was an infant. And quite like the Arthurian Merlin, this twentieth-century Welshman, my father, was called the *Welsh wizard*—for reasons altogether apart from alliteration! (Obviously, the characteristically comic parallel could not have been made during our childhood. However prescient she may have been, my mother could not have foreseen the coming of a day that would find her the gracious hostess of 10 Downing Street!) The second Merlin—we must always have three of everything in Wales—was also a wizard—Merlin Morgan, who for many years ruled the musical destinies of Daly's Theatre during its heyday and who was our organist on Sundays. And now we have the third Merlin—the Merlin Rolls-Royce engine, wizard of the skies.

Not only because truthfulness demanded it, but because the Welsh are wont to idealize so-called failure in material ways, the stories my mother told us were chiefly tales of men magnificent in defeat. There was, for instance, Owain Glyndwr, known in



England as Owen Glendower. Born in 1359 of a long line of Welsh princes, he seemed destined to become worthy of bearing the one title the ancient Britons had longed for centuries to bestow. And in due course, when he had successfully sown the seeds of nationalism from one end of Wales to the other, a grateful people by common assent proclaimed him *The Man of Wales*. His growing strength gave Edward III grave concern, but when Richard II ascended the English throne, Owen Glendower was made an esquire and Chief Lord of Powys, eventually becoming the Prince of Wales. Alas for his hopes of real Welsh Nationalism! After the first flames of enthusiasm died down the people lapsed into their former apathy, from which even their well-beloved and inspired leader could not a second time arouse them. So, like others before and after him, Owen Glendower gave up the struggle and went into voluntary retirement. How completely he shut himself off from even his closest followers is to be inferred from the fact that the last days of his life and the manner and place of his death are wrapped in mystery. The fact remains he *was* The Man of Wales, and his memory is revered every whit as reverently as it would be had he succeeded instead of failing in his great purpose.

Of set purpose I risk creating the illusion that Welsh children are encouraged by such home teaching to live in the past, and thus fail to keep step with modern progress, so-called. But any inference of that kind would be illusory. If to be brave, loyal, self-sacrificing is to be old-fashioned, Welsh parents are not afraid to have their children thus stigmatized. It is not to shed lustre on our ancient heroes that these tales are told; it is rather to keep burning brightly in the breasts of today's rising generation the heroic qualities bequeathed them by their doughty ancestors. Is anything more truly dead than that which is forgotten? How much less real, less vibrantly alive would be He who gave us the Sermon on the Mount if throughout the ages all Christendom had not daily sung His praises? My mother lies in the family vault in Criccieth, but all Wales will tell you the force of her example will never die.

In this sense, then, the fairies and the giants of ancient times about whom she would tell us are also still very much alive. Not the least intriguing fact about Welsh fairies, as contrasted with the fairies of most other lands, is that there are two kinds—good and bad! Whereas, elsewhere, the fairies of folk-lore are uni-

versally objects of adoration because they are the embodiment of all that is good, in Wales the traditionally good fairy has its opposite number in an utterly malevolent sprite. So it is, my mother was wont to tell us, a rousing good stand-up and knock-down fight could always be provided on the Criccieth green on market days. All that was necessary to initiate hostilities was for the farmers of the fertile lowlands to accuse the sheep-herders down from their rocky pastures in the hills of being descended from fairy ancestors. This was a blot on their good name that could be rubbed out only by recourse to battle, for all the *mountain* fairies are notoriously wicked! Only in the less harsh lowlands are the fairies good and kind and happiness-makers. (Lest we, who had the good fortune to live in the favoured district, preened ourselves unduly, my mother never failed to point out a great truth that is in essence peculiarly Welsh. Because, like a vacuum, nature abhors the distortion that arises from a lack of balance, there must be wicked fairies if we are to appreciate the good fairies. To resist the charms of the one and to love the other—this was the way to prove our own goodness.)

As for the giants, I do not recall my mother having made reference to their moral qualities one way or the other. Indeed, they were of such immense size as to beggar description in this respect alone. When the tale of their physical monstrosity had been told, there were no words left with which to portray their ethical code, if any. But the fact of their existence was as irrefutable as the very mountains in which they lived. Did you give voice to even the faintest doubt about them, overwhelming proof was close at hand. Out in the green-blue waters of the lovely bay that washes the shores of Caernarvonshire—not so far out as to be still covered at low tide—is a huge, round boulder, white and polished by the action of the waves through thousands of years. The point about this great stone, altogether different from the dark-red indigenous rocks that jut out from the sea-bed, is that its kind is to be found only high up in the mountains. And in that indisputable fact lies the proof all-sufficient to silence any doubter. For, of course, it could have come to rest where it is only by having been carried there by a giant—in *his shoe*! And when the pebble hurt his foot he picked it out and tossed it into the sea!

I loved none of my mother's tales more than that one.

## CHAPTER III

*Nid oes neb heb ei fai.*

A faultless he or faultless she,  
Go where you will, you'll never see.

By almost universal agreement the Welsh people insist that there have never been any native kings amongst their rulers. Welsh princes there were in abundance, in itself enough to account for its present status as the Principality of Wales. It was of these princes that my mother had an inexhaustible store of fascinating stories to tell, but she was of the great majority who refuted the suggestion that kings ever held dominion over the early Britons. Over against this deep-rooted belief are references in otherwise authoritative histories to the *three old Kingdoms of Wales*, naming the monarchs respectively Nynniaw, Peibiw and Bleddyn ap Cynfyn. The last-named, said to have been "King of North Wales," is supposed to have fallen in battle in 1073.

Present-day convention makes absurd the thought of princes in a land devoid of kings. Obviously, since only the son of a king can be a prince, the existence of Welsh princes presupposes kingly fathers. But such reasoning, in the face of my mother's unshakable conviction, leaves me unconvinced. Far more likely, as I see it, this trio of so-called *kings* were merely leaders of exceptional power who ruled over far larger areas than did the lesser princes. A possible explanation of so misnaming them is to be found in the Welsh name *Tywysog* from *Tywys*, which means "to lead," not "to rule." And royal lineage had nothing whatever to do with their dubbing themselves princes. To this day, as my mother was careful to point out, we speak of a prince of good fellows—a term we might conceivably refuse to apply to the male offspring of many a monarch!

After all, she would say, what's in a name? Once upon a time in England, the Smiths and the Bakers, the Wrights and the Millers, took their names from their occupations. Considerations of colour accounted for the original Whites, Blacks, Browns and Greens. Yet others—the Hills, Rivers, Brooks, Meadows, Trees and so on—took their family name from their surroundings. So, if it pleased a man to call himself a king, who was there to say him nay? In point of fact, of course, a telephone book

in any English or American city has pages devoted to the clan King!

In Wales there are more Joneses in proportion to the total population than anywhere else in the world. And this is seemingly all the more remarkable since there is no *j* in the Welsh alphabet. In fact, the seeming paradox is simply explained. As my mother educated us in this matter of nomenclature, the early Welsh coined their family names without regard to occupation, colour or environment. Patronymics formed the basis of their acquiring the family name. The Welsh for John being *Ioan*, it is easy to see how the original John found his descendants being called Ioan's, and this in turn becoming translated into English as Jones—without the apostrophe. Since John is commonest of all male given names, it is only natural that the Jones families are by far the most numerous of all the Welsh clans. Also, since the name is of Welsh manufacture, its prevalence in English and American directories speaks volumes for the widespread travel urge of the men of Wales. On the face of it, every Jones in the world should be able to trace his ancestry back to Welsh forbears.

Williams and Roberts are obviously coined surnames that had an original William and a Robert as the respective founders of the families. In the case of Thomas, the apostrophe *and* the additional *s* was dispensed with for euphony's sake. The Davis family, like those who spell it Davies, are descendants of an original David. As for the Evans tribe, *Evan* or *Ifan* is a given name in Welsh, as many hundreds of shop-signs in Wales will testify. More often than not you will find the sign reads Evan Evans. Oddly enough, my mother's family name remained unchanged. The first Owen took on no possessive form in the case of those who claimed it as their own. Unlike the Evanses, my maternal ancestors clung to the given name without adding the customary *s*. Thus you can meet an Owen Owen, and whether he knows it or not, his bearing that brace of identical names makes him unique—at least in so far as Welsh nomenclature is concerned.

Harris is obviously a later-day change from *Harry's*. Since Harry, or *Harri* in Welsh, is in turn a nickname for the Anglo-French *Henry*, its transformation into Harris seemed to my mother to have more justification than the altering of more distinctive given names. Another branch of an original Harry's clan—and a

numerous breed it is—call themselves Parry. Thereby hangs an etymological tale told, I suppose, by all Welsh mothers to their offspring.

Like the German *von*, and the Scottish *mac*, and the Irish *o'*, we of Wales have *ap*, meaning *the son of*. Thus the son of Mr. Rice becomes progressively *ap Rice* and Price. *Ap Richard* develops into Prichard, or Pritchard. *Ap Howell* becomes Powell. Sometimes the *p* gives place to a *b*, and so we get Bevan and Bowen. But, as my mother took care to emphasize, there were families in which desire to perpetuate the name was strong enough to withstand this tendency. So my mother remained an Owen, my father a George.

In the Welsh vernacular there is nothing comical about another favourite story of my mother's, but her sense of humour enabled her to appreciate the risibilities latent in it when told to English or American audiences. There are, for instance, four men in Criccieth—total population a mere 1500—who are rightfully called Captain Jones. How, then, to distinguish between them? (The fact that two of them are bakers and the other two are café proprietors makes the task all the more difficult!) Well, this quartette is referred to as Jones Baker, Jones Castle, Jones Idris and Jones Gwalia. The first pair are the bakers, the second two are the restaurateurs. The second baker's shop is near the castle that dominates the town. The Idris and the Gwalia are the cafés' names. So, in some distant day to come, it is quite within the bounds of possibility that descendants of these four Joneses will have Baker, Castle, Idris and Gwalia as their respective family names! The reason this is not in the least laughable in the Welsh-speaking community is that *of the* is understood between, say, Jones and the identifying noun.

Thus Mr. Roberts, local manager of the Crosville Bus Route, is distinguished from all the other Roberts in the neighbourhood by being generally known as Roberts Crosville. A Criccieth bank is presided over by one of the numerous Parry clan. If you are introduced to him you will discover his generally recognized name is Mr. Parry Bank! Similarly, the postmaster is known far and wide as Mr. Williams Post! But how is one to keep a straight face when one learns that another Williams, like his father before him, has *Eighty* tacked on to his familiar name? If the family had included octogenarian ancestors, the identifying numeral

would be at least understandable, but age does not enter into it. Williams Eighty is so called because this is the street number of the family home!

Does all this seem inconsequential? Compilers of guide-books ignore this odd system of nomenclature in favour of setting forth the exact height of Mount Snowdon, the exact age of each of the Border Marches Castles. But to my mind it is important for a twofold reason. It is, first, a facet of the real Welsh character, unchanged through the centuries, an integral part of every child's early education. Second, the fact that my mother could season the teaching with the spice of laughter is surely of significance. At any rate, this is *real* and truly Welsh. I leave to the guide-books their unimaginative cataloguing of the obvious topographical and historic landmarks of my native land. As my mother saw it, these are the least important of the good things that constitute the real Wales.

Let other American millionaires follow in the footsteps of William Randolph Hearst and, like him, acquire title to a Welsh castle. No one in Wales that I know of, least of all my mother, voiced any objection to that transfer of title. There is no reason to suppose any resentment would be felt if others emulated the American newspaper proprietor in buying up the historic citadels. By right of purchase they could own a bit of Wales. All their wealth would not suffice to give them any real knowledge of the country or its people. This is not to say that I am blind to the manifold beauties of my native hills and dales, unappreciative of the glory of Welsh history. No child born of my mother could fail to be a passionate lover of the Principality; her love of Wales and everything Welsh was so great as to have left an indelible imprint on all her children. But scenic beauty, like mediaeval fortresses, is not an exclusive Welsh glory. If it be true that it is an understatement to liken the Pass of Aberglaslyn to a miniature Swiss valley, if in fact nothing in all Europe is so lovely to the eye as that charming vista, it is at any rate there for all to see. It was not my mother's way to gild the lily. Perhaps because I am her son the idea makes no appeal to me.

Instead, let us tarry yet a while in the living Wales, in the realm of the little things that my mother held so dear, the things the people talk about among themselves, the things they teach their children. Let us consider other names.

There is, for instance, Bryn-Eglwys, a mile from her home, ancestral home of the Yale family. My mother used to express curiosity about Elihu Yale—just why he migrated to New England in the wake of the Pilgrim Fathers, and how it happened his name should have been given to the University which has turned out so many notable men of letters to the world. She was even more curious to know how many Yale University graduates ever heard of Bryn-Eglwys!

Another instance—without undue exaggeration it might be termed a tragedy of nomenclature—that much intrigued my mother, was the story of the man who said, “Dr. Livingstone, I presume.” Thanks to the ubiquitous films, the world generally knows the remark was made by the explorer, Stanley. But how many people beyond the borders of Wales know Stanley was not his name? In fact, he was born John Rowlands near by the Castle of Denbigh. Rumour has it that poverty and brutal parents made him hate his name almost as much as he did the hovel in which his boyhood was spent. In any event, it is history that he, too, crossed the ocean to the New World, where—in an endeavour to blot out the past—he changed his name. Is it possible that Hollywood deemed this tragic background of no importance in the delineation of the film hero’s character? Is it not more probable the makers of the film did not know Stanley’s real name?

Much nearer our home, at Tremadog, is the birthplace of the man destined to become world-famous as Lawrence of Arabia. How curious, my mother was wont to say, that here again a great man chose to hide his real identity under an assumed name! In this case, however, it was neither poverty nor brutal parents that was responsible for the unavailing attempt to hide his identity. (The world quickly learned that Aircraftsman Shaw was in fact the one and only Lawrence of Arabia.) The reason that impelled him to escape from the embarrassment of world acclaim was plain enough. I recall how sympathetic my mother was, how understanding. It is given to few men, she would say, to be truly great—and even fewer are those whose innate modesty makes fame an abhorrent thing.

The world knows he met his death in an accident while riding a motor-cycle. Such an end was tragic enough in all conscience, but in my mother’s wise eyes a greater tragedy had already engulfed the Tremadog boy when the plaudits of his admirers

drove him to the sorry expedient of trying in vain to gain the peace of mind enjoyed by mediocrity.

From names to cheese! At least the two dissimilar subjects have one thing in common—the outside world knows as little about Welsh cheese as it does about Welsh names. Although it is true (and to be regretted) that Welsh cheese is not exported, it used to be made in every farmhouse in the Principality, a distinctive type, the like of which is to be found nowhere else. Called *caws cartref*, it has for generations been a staple article of diet in all Welsh homes. Wherefore my mother disagreed with those who declare that the Welsh rarebit was so named because cheese in Wales was a rarity. She maintained it should be spelled as it is pronounced—*rabbit*. After all, the wits of Ireland talk about Irish *apricots* (meaning potatoes), and in Ulster they jokingly call the humble spuds Munster *plums*! So, in my mother's opinion, the toothsome dish of toasted cheese came to be known as a Welsh *rabbit* because under the Feudal laws the shooting of rabbits was prohibited and therefore the common herd did the next best thing and made a joke about it. But whether *rabbit* or *rarebit*, there is no cheese I have ever tasted so delicious to the taste as *caws cartref*.

Finally, in these vagrant, disconnected boyhood memories I feel I must include two anecdotes which, true or not, made a profound impression on me, as they were dramatically narrated by my mother. They are the more vivid in my memory because attached to each is a moral, the form of tale my mother loved best to tell and I loved best to hear.

The first has to do with a horse, an equine of rare good sense and with a fine idea of substantial justice. Its owner was a prosperous farmer who had amassed a fortune (judged by Welsh standards) by dealing in horses. It was said of him he had "an eye for a horse," the countryman's way of saying his skill as a judge of horseflesh was superlatively good. However this may be, he certainly did have the knack of buying an animal at a bargain price and selling it at a handsome profit. And if this were all there had been to say about him, the tale would not have been worth the telling. But it was not all. Shrewd as he was in his buying, clever as he was in persuading others to pay his asking price, he was stupidly short-sighted in his treatment of his farmhands. In all the countryside no master was so niggardly towards



his helpers, none drove them so hard, none was so truly mean to his wage-slaves.

Now one day to the horse-dealer came a wise man. This man had no horse to sell, nor did he wish to buy one. He had come, he said, to beseech the other to treat his workers less brutally. And before the rich man could order him to be off, and thereafter mind his own business, the visitor added a warning. Gravely he declared that the horse-dealer would meet with a violent death if he persisted in this inhuman treatment of his men. To this the irate farmer replied with a sneer.

"Save your breath," he said. "You cannot frighten me with empty threats. There is not one amongst my workmen with courage enough to raise his voice, much less his hand, against me."

"That may be true," said the other, "but you are overlooking the danger from another quarter. Think you well, Master Farmer; do not underestimate the intelligence of your horses."

And sure enough, not long afterwards the expert horseman—showing off the fine points of a usually docile mare to a prospective buyer—was set upon by the animal with such fury as to make his rescue impossible. In a matter of seconds his mangled corpse lay crumpled on the ground!

The other story might aptly be titled *The Avenging Bull*, for in this case it was a cattleman whose wickedness was duly punished by a dumb brute when human counsel was unavailing. This stock-breeder was an atheist and held in contempt the swelling numbers of those who were turning to religion during the great revival period in Wales. Half-owner with him in the prosperous cattle business was a brother, a devout believer who strove mightily to win the other away from his sinful refusal to believe in the existence of God.

This brother, as was his right, gave permission to an itinerant preacher—on his way through the countryside, conducting out-of-doors revivalist meetings—to hold services in a pasture of the joint-owned farm. When the infidel brother learned of this he became very angry indeed, and vowed he would break up the services before they could be got under way. And on the face of it the wicked means he chose to adopt seemed certain to succeed. It was nothing less than to let loose amongst the worshippers a most savage bull!

But when the great beast, goaded into madness by the atheist,

came charging down upon the crowd about the minister it suddenly stopped and for a space stood with lowered head, pawing the ground and emitting terrifying sounds. Then, suddenly it wheeled about and charged straight at the man who had let it loose! Before its victim, rooted to the spot in terror, could spring out of its path, the bull was upon him. Only when it seemed nothing could save him from being gored to death did the brother move. With the help of a few daring farm-hands he drove off the infuriated animal. And because his life had been spared by what he himself realized was nothing less than a miracle, he confessed the error of his ways, and prayed for forgiveness at the hands of God. And so another convert was made.

Quite apart from its moral value, this tale especially appealed to my mother because it bore out (by implication) one of her favourite beliefs. It was simply that in the worst of men there is some redeeming quality, just as by the best of men perfection is never utterly achieved.

## CHAPTER IV

*Nid ofnawg ond dygasawg,  
Nid ofn heb achaws.*

Where fear is found, there hate is near;  
And fear but follows cause of fear.

LOVE is the accepted antonym of hate, but fearlessness is not universally held to be a synonym of courage. Indeed, there are many who insist that the bravest man is the one who is most afraid. We all know the sophistry implicit in the oft-repeated tale of abject terror causing a man to perform some epic deed of heroism—driven by the fear that his fearfulness may be discovered. There may or may not be some measure of truth in this psychological complexity, but it had nothing to do with my mother's unadulterated courage. Whether it is hatred that breeds fear or fear that engenders hatred may be open to question. I never heard my mother express an opinion on the subject. But I know she believed in the power of *love*. Loving and being loved, she had nothing to fear. And if this absence of fear be not the essence of courage, I must be sadly ignorant of the meaning of those terms.

"*Duw cariad yw*" is the one verse in the Bible which meant most to my mother, and for my part I hold it to be the greatest verse in our Holy Book. There is a greater depth of meaning to it than the English "*God is love.*" It emphasizes the great truth that the terms are synonymous—*love* and *God*.

This is not to say there were not moments in my mother's life when her courage was dramatically tested. I do not wish to give the impression that hers was an idyllic life or that she practised Couéism. She was far too clear-sighted, too level-headed, to live in a dream world of wishful thinking. But her courage was firmly rooted in her unwavering faith. And in this, as in so many other qualities that made her an outstanding figure, she personified all that is best in the Welsh character. In the formation of that character there is present in the Wales of today almost as rigid a Puritan discipline as prevailed in my mother's girlhood years.

Religion and education have long gone hand-in-hand in Wales, the combination recognized as the *sine qua non* of well-being in the true sense of the word. Curiously enough, it was an Act of the *English* Parliament that was directly responsible for thus closely joining spiritual devotion and mental development. It was,

in fact, an altogether unexpected result of the law enacted in 1563 commanding the Welsh bishops to have a complete Welsh Bible ready by 1566. The great work, entrusted to Bishop Morgan, was destined to become known as a masterpiece of Welsh prose, the Scriptures in Welsh earning as great a place in the national life of Wales as Luther's Bible gained in Germany. Besides its incomparable beauty, this Welsh Bible effectively checked any tendency to replace the national language by the English vernacular. For in the churches the service was invariably in Welsh—and everyone was a regular churchgoer.

To this day, attendance at the morning service does not end the Welsh observance of the Sabbath. Quite as important, quite as regularly attended is—Sunday School. Nor are the pupils solely children as in other countries. In the Welsh Sunday School there is much for adults to learn and there are as many grown-ups in any "class" as, earlier in the day, form a proportion of the church congregation. The stress is on the *School*, the teaching as invaluable to men and women of mature years as to children. And nowhere is the longing for education greater than it is in Wales. Indeed, as compared with this national thirst for knowledge all other more material ambitions amount to nothing.

It was less than two hundred years ago that a great revivalist, Howel Harris, aroused Wales from its mediaeval lethargy. One of his successors, Thomas Charles, was the outstanding pioneer of the Sunday School movement. It was largely due to his great work that Welsh chapels became not only centres of worship but also took on the character of clubs. Down through the decades from the middle of the eighteenth century these chapels have rung with the voices of earnest debaters engaged in verbal contest, the subject as often as not non-religious and non-sectarian. On the platform in the Sunday School, in sharp contrast to the pulpit in the chapel proper, men and women gave unfettered expression to their opinions. They not only did, they still do. And from these debates and informal discourses the mixed gathering of all ages learned—and still learn—much that otherwise would be beyond their ken.

It was then that *hwyl*, the famous intoning of the Welsh pulpit, came into its own. In no other language is there anything quite like the Welsh *hwyl*, the secret of a Welsh orator's ability to sway his hearers and bend them to his mesmeric will. An ade-

quate description of the system is almost impossible, but generally speaking it follows certain broad principles. There is first the quiet, matter-of-fact marshalling of the facts—an unemotional laying of the foundation, as it were. Then atop this solid base is reared the argument evolving from the premises, always three in number. Up and up to the highest peaks of oratory go the speaker's inspired flights of word-imagery, until, following the tremendously emotional climax, he once again reverts to the low-pitched, quiet tones of a disseminator of unarguable facts. This gift of oratory has been called an instance of Welsh wizardry, and in so far as it is a set formula I suppose there is an element of play-acting latent in the method. But this is not to impugn the sincerity of the speaker. One might as justly question the sincerity of the Welsh people's love of music—purely on the grounds of their great proficiency as soloists or in great oratorio singing. In the truest sense the practice of *hwyl* is comparable with the singer's art—in nowise the less sincere because it is the result of long and patient study.

The *per capita* wealth of the two million inhabitants of Wales is less than that of any of the three other nations that form the United Kingdom. But no people on earth is richer in the number of its places of worship or in the multiplicity of sects. Being poor, the country might understandingly lack the wherewithal it would like to have to ensure every Welsh child's receiving a classical education. The fact is, Wales is fifty years in advance of England in its school system. And this magnificent richness of educational facilities is due in a large measure to the untiring efforts of my mother and father. Supplementing the schools' work there is the great good accomplished by the Sunday Schools. Here the hunger of the eager boy and girl, omnivorous in their quest for knowledge, is fully satisfied. Here, within the four walls of the unpretentious chapel, is inculcated culture and, equally important, the art of argument, in young and old alike. And because the teaching is done in a house of God there underlies *truth* in every lesson.

Long in dying as are the customs of my people—the contrast ever sharper as the rest of the world tends more and more to worship change for change's sake—the Welsh Sunday of my mother's day was in no respect different from that of her ancestors. Except that the stocks are now no longer used for punishment, the Welsh Sabbath of today presents an outward show of Puritanism

as rigidly formal as it did four centuries ago. I say an *outward show* because, if one is to believe the comments of disapproving, head-shaking elders, the coming generation is being weaned away from true, inward observance of the holy day by the insidious influence of the cinema. These old ones either fail to see, or if the spectacle is clear to their age-dimmed eyes they fail to appreciate, the significance of a sight that must fill a stranger with wonderment bordering on disbelief—a sight common to every village green in Wales when Sunday comes round.

Where else on earth will you find, tucked under the arm of every man and boy and clasped in the hand of every woman and girl, a well-thumbed copy of the Bible or hymn-book? Where else do men and women and children emerge soberly from their homes and proceed with no trace of weekday hurry to their respective chapels—the whole village literally arrayed in its Sunday best? Where else is the peace which passeth understanding so manifest as in this countryside?

This spectacle of a whole people carrying THE BOOK must strike alien eyes as something resurrected from a bygone age. In fact, it is the visible proof that hand-in-hand with their religious ardour goes an insatiable thirst for knowledge—a thirst that finds its slaking in reverent study of THE BOOK. To others it must seem strangely like groups of proverbially leaden-footed children making their reluctant way to school, complete with school books. The difference is that the Welsh—on Sunday—*go home* from church in the same unhurried fashion. Not by word nor action must the hurly-burly of the working weekday profane the Sabbath.

My mother knew what her forbears also knew—what cynics will tell you is true today—that some percentage of these ostensibly devout churchgoers are, in fact, hypocrites. Now, as then, there are some who are actuated by fear of disrepute. *What will people say?* There is no gainsaying the fact that the mere posing of this question is enough to keep the would-be backslider in the straight and narrow path. It is on record, for instance, that men of substance, shopkeepers dependent for their continued prosperity on the goodwill of the community, have gone stealthily and by round-about routes to some distant golf course to engage in a game of Sunday golf. But these are the rare exceptions. And even they would not think of desecrating the Sabbath by entering a public-house—if by any unthinkable circumstances Welsh

purveyors of strong drink were allowed to open their doors on Sunday!

Of course the cinemas are closed throughout the day. In Wales there would be no toleration of the compromise made in recent years by the English, who permit the opening of cinemas in the late afternoon—when all possibility of their affecting attendance at midday church services has been removed. For in Wales the morning service and the midday Sunday School hour are followed by evening service. Not only cinemas, by universal assent throughout Wales the roads are singularly free of vehicular traffic on Sunday. Before petrol rationing and the wartime ban on pleasure-motoring, the only place for a Welsh car on the Sabbath was the garage.

As for the slanderous charge so frequently levelled at my countrymen—that in business deals they are tricksters—I see no reason to refute it. In point of fact, if business acumen and native shrewdness in the matter of buying and selling are to be held reprehensible, then my mother was as guilty as the cleverest of her neighbours. For in all Wales there was no better business brain. But skill in bargaining needs not to carry with it the taint of sharp practice, surely! As well charge a boxer or a fencer with misbehaviour when he brings about his adversary's defeat through feinting! In the prize ring, after all, the rules specifically state that the contestants must protect themselves at all times and under all conditions. Similarly in business there is the warning latent in *caveat emptor*. Will anyone suggest that to buy at the lowest possible price and to sell at the top of the market is exclusively a Welsh custom? If one gave credence to common report, one would be inclined to conclude that the whole Welsh people are drivers of hard bargains.

This brings me to another national characteristic of the Wales my mother knew and loved, another striking proof that only in her hills and valleys can be found true Britons. Elsewhere in the United Kingdom the Roman law (by which the eldest son inherits the bulk of his parents' estate) is followed. In Wales, with few exceptions, it is the ancient Britons' custom that prevails. Almost invariably the estate is divided equally amongst all the children, the accident of being the first-born male giving him no preferential standing as an heir. You have to look no further than this to find an all-sufficient explanation of the absence of concentrations of great wealth in the hands of a small number of

landed gentry. It accounts for the disappearance over the centuries of the vast domains, title to which was once vested in those princes of another day. Here surely is abundant refutation of the charge that acquisitiveness is Wales' besetting sin. Such scattering of a lifetime of amassing gives the lie to that slander.

Whether it is because the Welsh have a keen appreciation of the verities they are devoutly religious, or because their devotion to the teachings of the Bible gives them the power to eschew what is evil and cling to what is good, the important thing is that in this sea-girt, rock-ribbed land are to be found humility and kindness, reverence and charity, love of poetry and music. Here the voice that greets you is soft and friendly. Here the hint of laughter is ever present in the twinkling eyes that look squarely into yours. And yet an unwritten law *bans singing* in any Welsh public-house!

Does this appear to be an anomaly? Do you say wine and song have been conjoined from time immemorial? My mother, a teetotalter, had her own opinion as to the fitness of this ban. Singing, she held, is a glorious, a glorifying form of self-expression, in its cadences the very essence of emotionalism. To burst into song requires no alcoholic stimulation. On the contrary, it is as natural an impulse as drink-inspired gaiety is artificial. Never would my mother agree with the fallacy, *in vino veritas*. In the home, in chapel, in the glens and on the hillsides, anywhere save in a pub, voices could be raised in song—singers and hearers alike ennobled by the harmony. Let bibbers, tongues loosened and voices coarsened by their imbibing, confine themselves to unmelodious speech. A nightingale, its throat so affronted, would be mute! (Incidentally, the nightingale never came to Wales, refusing to cross the Severn because the competition is too strenuous!) So, in Wales, the landlord may fill the flowing bowl—but not to the accompaniment of music.

This picture of the Welsh Sunday may be sombre but it was very true in my boyhood days, and in reality it is the result of the discipline imposed by the great Puritan revival of the eighteenth century.

As a small boy in Criccieth I went out one Sunday at noon. It was a glorious June day and all the birds were twittering and singing. I put my hand in my trouser pocket and strutted past



the kitchen windows, whistling lustily. A smart rap on the glass pulled me up short, and there was my grandmother peremptorily ordering me in. I realised my sin, my only consolation being that I knew that smacking as well as whistling was *verboden*. My argument before *Nain* that if the birds could do it why couldn't I, cut no ice; they were dumb creatures and knew no better. I was placed in a small sitting-room, not to emerge until I had learnt a psalm by heart.

There, then, is the frame in which I now propose to put the portrait of my mother—a setting at once unobtrusive and appropriate because in the main it was the very warp and woof of her life. True, she travelled to far-distant places. To North and South America she made pilgrimages. The Riviera she knew well. And, of course, there were the years in Downing Street; in each of those adjoining houses known the world over as No. 10 and No. 11—the unimpressiveness of the numerals in striking contrast to the epochal decisions which through the decades have been made within these walls. But always, wherever duty or pleasure led her, Wales was the abiding-place of her heart.

Why then, you may ask, have I studiously avoided so much as mention of the physical attractions of the land she loved so well? It is not at all because I am not aware of the great part environment plays in the development of character. It is not because my eyes are blind to the manifold beauties of my native land, which by themselves go far to account for the religious fervour of the Welsh people generally, and for my mother's faith in particular. Indeed, I am prepared to agree with those who will say this frame is incomplete without a description of the glories of a Welsh sunrise, the inspiration that must sublimate the dullest clod when first he glimpses the ineffable loveliness of lordly Snowdon and its lesser neighbouring summits that come stepping down to bathe their feet in the blue-green waters of the sunlit sea. But I have a reason for this omission—quite apart from the fact that pens far abler than mine have copiously covered the field.

My justification lies in the fact that the land of my mother's birth was so much a living part of her as to make it inseparable from her innermost being. In a word, she *was* Wales. Wherefore the mute mountains and the laughing streams, the ancient castles and the lowly cottages, will be shown to you as they were shown to me—by my mother.



RICHARD AND MARY OWEN  
Parents of Dame Margaret Lloyd George



## PART TWO: THE PORTRAIT

### CHAPTER I

*Tair amosgre pob peth:  
Amser; lle; a rhyw.*

Fit time, fit place, fit quality;  
These three are opportunity.

ANCESTOR worship is, I realize, an instance of wishful thinking. To boast of being well-born is, admittedly, evidence of having little else of which to be proud. This to the contrary notwithstanding, I firmly believe what Edmund Burke has to say in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*:

“People will not look forward to posterity who never look backward to their ancestors.”

As the father of two children, then, not egotistically, I direct myself to the task of setting forth in detail the magnificent heritage of birth that is theirs by virtue of having my mother's blood in their veins.

If you hold that genealogy no longer matters, that this is an era of self-made men, I will content myself with retorting that there is nothing modern in that viewpoint. See what Sheridan puts into the mouth of one of the characters in *The Rivals*:

“Our ancestors are very good kind of folks; but they are the last people I should choose to have a visiting acquaintance with.”

Nor is the fashionable cynicism of the younger generation who laugh at their elders' family album as a relic of aspidistra days a new development. In a museum in Antwerp is (or was) the first printing press ever made. One of its first products was a poem titled *Recipe for Happiness*. After cataloguing the essential ingredients—a cheery home, a good garden, a faithful wife, etc.—it ends with the admonition

—and not too much to do with one's relations.

So today's young folk who think it's smart to be flippant on the subject of one's family tree had their prototypes in ancient times. Indeed, if this tendency to be self-sufficient and disdainful of the

stock from which one springs were not as old as man himself there would have been no reason for the Fifth Commandment.

The danger inherent in undertaking anyone's genealogical history is that element of wishful thinking to which I have referred. There is the ever-present risk of laying oneself open to a charge such as Thomas Moore cites in his *Life of Sheridan*:

“The Right Honourable gentleman is indebted to his memory for his jests, and to his imagination for his facts.”

Or, as Daniel Defoe puts it in *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*:

Great families of yesterday we show,  
And lords whose parents were the Lord knows who.

To avoid this danger I shall do my utmost to be mathematically precise in what follows, not an easy thing to do when one's inclination is to wax eloquent.

What an ironic commentary on our co-called state of cultural development it is that convention demands our approaching the subject of our breeding in an apologetic spirit! No such humility marks the owners of pedigreed dumb animals. The progeny of a Derby winner are never victims of understatement as regards their inherited prowess as potential champions. The significance of breeding is there for all to see and understand—in the auction ring at bloodstock sales the world over. Only in the case of the human animal is it considered bad form to dwell overmuch on the family tree.

Without apology, then, I say my mother might well have inspired Kipling to write that memorable couplet which is a photographic likeness of her:

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch.

And because I am as sure as I am of anything that this great gift of hers was inherited, I hold firm to the conviction that it did not die with her, that just as it was transmitted to her from her forbears, so it inevitably will be handed down through generations yet unborn. Not only is precept a force for good, belief in heredity makes light of centuries and vitalizes long-dead ancestors into reborn vibrancy.

Candour compels me to admit that *parentalia* (how odd that

only the Romans coined a word for the cult) played but a small part in my mother's scheme of things. To her way of thinking aphorisms anent birth and breeding were best left unspoken. As she saw it, the acid test by which a man's character is rightly to be appraised is to put his deeds under the microscope. The accident of birth, like the advantage of family tradition, should count not at all in arriving at a true estimate of the individual's worth. If anything, the scales should be weighted against the inheritor of noble qualities. Indeed, from such a one greater virtue should be demanded than from those less happily favoured.

My mother had, however, far too logical a mind to be willing to accept any effect without questing for the cause. Even a less richly endowed intellect would have sought the reason of her remarkable ability to be at home in palaces and the humblest of farm cottages, to be as serenely royal with royalty as she was gently gracious with labourers on the land or the fisher folk of her native Criccieth. And that reason, in her case, could never have had mere tact as a satisfactory explanation. For in her relations with others she was the soul of sincerity. For her no party manners; always she was herself. And this, she knew full well, meant that she was the re-embodiment of her ancestors.

So, to know my mother you must know something of the stock from which she sprang. As in the case of her funeral, I find myself wishing again she were here to tell the story in her own whimsical way. For I am sure she could embellish the tale with infectious laughter, and altogether avoid the drab prosiness of the usual *begat* chronicles. Specifically she could have spoken with first-hand knowledge of her grandparents, whom I never saw. And from them she undoubtedly had authentic word-pictures of their grandparents, equipping her with knowledge of a generation five times removed from mine. (I wonder if parenthood brings to everyone, as it has to me, the depressing realization of how limited is the span of our actual acquaintance with our kinsfolk. Except for its being an irrefutable fact, it seems incredible that my two children, if they give any thought to it at all, regard my grandparents as misty, almost legendary figures!)

It is they—my mother's father and mother, Richard and Mary Owen—whom I shall first try to revivify. In their case, to strip the mummy wrappings from them is an easy task. For my memory pictures them as being quite as potent and as much

alive as they were when I was a boy. Nor am I alone in this. In Criccieth and for many miles around that little township it would be difficult to find a man or woman of middle age to whom mention of my grandparents would not conjure up vivid memories of a kind of dynamic personality that never dies. Just as boys and girls throughout Caernarvonshire speak today in the present tense when they refer to my mother, so the older generation gossip about my grandparents quite as if they were still present in the flesh. And with abundant reason. A more striking character than my mother's father I have never met. As for my mother's mother, there dwelt within her fragile, tiny frame a veritable Niagara of indomitable force. If my grandfather had the physical attributes of a mastiff—and in my boyish eyes this even-tempered, slow-of-speech, devoutly religious giant had all the powerful magnificence of that majestic breed of dog—my grandmother's volcanic eruptiveness never failed to cow him. I can see her now—eyes flashing, head held high—confronting the man mountain who was her husband, and ordering him to do her bidding. Long after I had ceased to be a boy such episodes always reminded me of another canine parallel—the tolerant mastiff's yielding to the domination of a furious corgi!

In North Wales, where for countless generations stock-raising and agriculture have been the means of livelihood of a greater part of the population, physical strength is understandably a prized asset. For the most part, these men of the soil are all stocky, well-muscled specimens. They have to be if they are to survive. For the land is generally poor, the top soil shallow, and only long hours and prodigious labour can wrest from it a living. So, for my grandfather to have been generally recognized as the strongest, most powerfully built man in all the countryside is saying something. He was so recognized, and tales of his physical prowess are told and retold to this day wherever old fellows forgather over pewter pots of beer.

My mother told me two stories.

A young Welsh Black bull charged him in the field early one morning. He grasped one horn with his right hand and, jerking its head up, plunged the thumb and forefinger of his left hand into the nostrils. He led it a distance of over fifty yards (I know the spot well) to a place in the hedge where escape was possible. On another occasion they were carting hay in a particularly tricky

field—a typical Welsh upland slope. The young mare in the shafts did not relish the angle of the cart and started to move. He took two of the spokes in his hands and held the outfit stationary until his men could get to her head.

Offspring of landed gentry stock, Richard Owen was born in Tyddyn Adi as the first quarter of the nineteenth century ended, on May 28, 1824. On his marriage to Mary Jones, daughter of William Jones, Tyddyn Mawr, he moved to Dolwgan.

Dolwgan is a small farm at the entrance to the beautiful Pennant valley. It was heavy going farming there because the fierce little mountain stream coming down the Pennant could play havoc in the winter. It was a tough school for young folk, but the breeding was there. His education, as in the case of his brothers, was very sketchy as far as English was concerned, but Welsh literature and poetry more than compensated.

Although in Wales from time immemorial matriarchy has been the rule rather than the exception, women's sway has been confined to the home for the most part. Militant women in public life, such as the early leaders amongst the Suffragettes, are a breed unknown in this land of Puritan concepts. (Women are not allowed, for instance, to attend private funerals.) Wherefore when, as frequently happens, a Welsh woman becomes a public figure in her native community, it is of precedent-shattering importance. My mother's mother enjoyed this eminence from the time she left her girlhood days behind until her death. If her dainty feet never scaled the exalted heights which her daughter was destined to tread, it is only because the opportunity was lacking. Of her ability to have comported herself in the highest circles with a queenly poise I have not the slightest doubt. Indeed, I can express my veneration of her no more convincingly than by saying she was the worthy mother of a great daughter. My grandmother never talked much to me of her mother—but her father she obviously adored. The reason I fancy was not far to seek. They were built alike. She used to delight in telling me of his appearance, his ways, his dapper clothes. On Sundays and gala days he sported knee-breeches with the most marvellous stockings and shoes. The shoes had silver buckles which were polished to a dazzling degree. He was a great figure on a horse, although, like his contemporary the Duke of Wellington, he was built on a compact scale. My grandmother was also a noted



horsewoman—and the little spirited Welsh ponies and cobs took some handling. It is to me nothing short of a tragedy that all her exquisite silver-mounted harness, bridles, and dainty little switches, which she gave to me when I was fifteen, mysteriously disappeared during my absence in France.

The antithesis of her only child in many respects, my grandmother was the embodiment of physical energy. Wherever she was, there you could be sure to find bustle. Every movement of hers was quick. Like a humming-bird flitting from flower to flower she made her energetic way about the house in a succession of darts. You could never envisage her going for a leisurely stroll. In fact, speed was so much the essence of her nature as to make progress on foot out of doors anathema to her, her journeyings about the neighbourhood always finding her mounted on a fiery Welsh pony. There are still in Caernarvonshire experts who will tell you my grandmother was one of the finest horsewomen.

In treating of the human as opposed to the dumb animal, especially in the matter of breeding, one obviously does not confine oneself to a consideration of physical characteristics; to my mother, for instance, were handed down mental traits as clearly defined and as readily traceable as inherited qualities as were her physical attributes. Wherefore it is necessary to direct our attention to the spiritual as well as the corporal nature of her parents.

My mother's father was a good man. A pillar of the Church, a kindly neighbour, a considerate employer, an honest bargainer, a faithful husband, a clean liver—all these he was. But also he was by inclination and deep-rooted conviction a firm believer in the advantages accruing from a *laissez-faire* policy. A staunch Liberal in so far as he was for Disestablishment, he saw nothing practicable (and therefore nothing good) in the kind of Radicalism that envisaged Home Rule for Wales. He had the blood of Owen Gwynedd in his veins, but what was meet for that ancient ancestor to undertake—armed resistance—was unthinkable in the Victorian era of peace and propriety. Far more important than wild-eyed theorizing about Nationalism, and definitely more practical, was the immediate business of getting on with one's job. Nationalism could not make Welsh soil more fertile. Unification of the North and South would not abate by one iota the prevalence of Foot Rot in Welsh sheep. So the passion of a Tom Ellis not only struck

no responsive chord in his breast; he strongly disapproved of that firebrand's preachments.

It speaks volumes for my grandfather's strength of character (if by the same token it bespeaks a narrowness of vision bordering on bigotry) that he should have remained obdurate and unmoved by the surge of democratic nationalism that swept through Wales in the later decades of the nineteenth century. It is probable he never knew of the dinner given to Tom Ellis by the British Empire Club in London in 1893 when the chief toast was The Principality of Wales. In responding to that toast this is what young Ellis said in part:

"I cannot explain nationality. But there it is, in Wales; and the channel through which it has been expressed is the ancient Cymric tongue. It seems to me one of the strangest facts in the history of Western Europe that this nationality, and more especially this language, has survived. The vitality of the language has withstood the most severe of all tests, the test of long centuries. It has survived the various tides of conquest that have swept over Wales; it has survived an infamous series of coercion statutes which followed the national movement under Owen Glendower. Happily these statutes are now a dead letter, but they were interesting as an example of splendid atrocity. It has survived the castle domination of the Normans and the Earls Marchers, and the plantation of garrison towns; it has survived alike the deadly lethargy of intellectual inaction and the feverish rush of commercial activity; it has even survived the deliberate calculated policy of the Hanoverian statesman who tried to anglicize Wales through the instrumentality of the Anglican Church; it has survived proscription, deliberate and sustained, of its use in the schools of Wales. Most wonderful of all, it has survived the insidious perils of respectability with its thousand 'gigs.' And it has found this abiding home on the peasants' hearth, in the simple churches and the rude chapels on the hillside and in the glens, in the ballads and hymns of Wales, which embodied the religious aspirations and emotions of the people."

Those were days, but little remembered even in Wales, when a distinguished Scotsman had this to say (and with none to say him nay):

"At the present time Wales and her people are receiving

far more consideration than at any time in their history since their conquest by the Saxons. We now find that the people of Wales actually hold the Government of England at their mercy. The Welsh members have secured from the Liberal Government a Suspensory Bill for the Welsh Church, and the appointment of a Land Commission for Wales, and they have also secured a Liquor Traffic Veto Bill for the Principality."

But such talk was wasted on my mother's father. And although it would not have mattered to him could he have lived to see it, the sorry fact is that in his obduracy he was in step with the Wales of today. For now, a half-century and more since Welsh rebels like Tom Ellis were making Welsh nationalism a living reality, cautious people, like my grandfather, shudder at the thought of another instance of Celtic separatism. I call it a sorry fact, but at any rate my mother's father has been proved right in so far as expressing in himself the sentiment of a vast majority of his fellow-countrymen is concerned. Long since, that surge of militant nationalism has disappeared. It would be fatuous today to speak of the importance of the Welsh position in Imperial politics, as fatuous as it is inconceivable that any British Imperial Society would deem it necessary to hold a dinner at which the chief toast was The Principality of Wales. She has already definitely established herself as an integral and not insignificant partner in the British Commonwealth. Her sons and daughters are taking a prominent part in building our future, and not for her will it be ever to present to the world the sorry and tragic picture of Ireland. We in Wales are too attached to and proud of our little country ever to allow our individuality to disappear. When things get dark and gloomy, we start to sing, not shoot. We have found it very effective on the football field, so in other spheres. Undoubtedly, as the years pass, Wales will obtain an ever-increasing measure of control over her own particular affairs without detriment to the rest of our Empire.

Only because he was younger and for a time somewhat less in the limelight, my father had less of my grandfather's disapprobation than Tom Ellis. A day was to come, however, when the cobbler's ward would earn the full measure of Richard Owen's stern disapproval. Hate can be engendered by intense political partisanship, of course, but in essence—like sectarianism—it is an

academic affair. Rage born of agony of mind is not thus inflamed. Radical blatherskites were beneath contempt, nuisances to be cold-shouldered. In this respect my grandfather, it has always seemed to me, had much in common with Shylock.

After all, in demanding his pound of flesh Shakespeare's Jew was in no towering rage; he was merely demanding his rights as a creditor. Nor, as I see it, was he overmuch perturbed by Portia's adroitness in saving her client from the knife. Up to this point passion plays no part in the tragedy. But how different when the merchant of Venice is struck in a vital spot! Then, and only then, he becomes incoherent in his mental agony. "My daughter! My ducats! My ducats! My daughter!" These are cries of a heart filled with mingled agony and anger. Crafty cunning vanishes. Here is stark emotionalism.

So it was with Richard Owen, prosperous tenant farmer and ardent Presbyterian, when he discovered that his daughter, his only child, was in love with young David Lloyd George, Radical Liberal and—no less damnable—a Baptist!

## CHAPTER II

*Tri pheth nis gall namyn Duw:  
dyoddef bythoedd y ceugant;  
cynghyd a phob cyflwr heb newidiaw;  
a rhoi gwell a newydd ar bob peth,  
heb ei roi ar goll.*

These three prerogatives doth God enjoy:  
To make new out of old, yet nought destroy,  
To bear the stress of Time's eternal range,  
And be all changeful forms yet never change.

To revert for a moment to the persistence of physical characteristics common to a given tribe, none is more striking than the presence in almost every generation of my grandfather's family of some one possessor of the "Eifion finger"—*bys yr Eifion*. Where it does occur it is invariably the small finger of the right hand that is affected—a bone malformation that locks the finger in a right-angle crook. My mother had it, and so, according to family lore, had Hywel y Fwyall, a fourteenth-century knight who figures in the family tree.

Hywel y Fwyall (Howell of the Axe) was a renowned old warrior in Eifionydd whose only weapon of offence and defence was a hefty axe, in the wielding of which he had become more than proficient. So much so, that at the battle of Poitiers (1356) he was instrumental in the capture of the French king by cutting off his horse's head. He was knighted on the field by the Black Prince.

Tradition maintains, of course, that it was this crook in his little finger that gave him his deadly and certain grip on his formidable weapon, and it seems cruel to debunk this story. Certainly the inherited abnormality was of sufficiently frequent recurrence to make the "Eifion finger" a well-understood phrase through the centuries. Of my own knowledge I can attest to two other instances of the transference of inherited qualities, physical and mental, which on occasions fairly stagger me.

In looks and build and action my younger sister Megan is my mother's mother all over again. The likeness is uncanny. It becomes ever more striking with each passing year. Nor does the replica end in these physical attributes. Her thoughts are the thoughts her grandmother, in the same circumstances, would have expressed. Indeed, anyone who knew them both would have small difficulty in embracing the cult of Reincarnation. Hardly less remarkable is the similarity between my brother

Gwilym and William Jones, Derwyn Fawr, my mother's uncle. So, in our generation we find two ancestors reborn.

If there is anything in heredity (and I for one have no doubt about it), the male members of my family in the generations to come should be immensely popular with their offspring. For the thought of corporal punishment of our offspring fills me and my brother with something akin to horror. For this we have to blame (or thank) our father *and* our maternal grandfather. It is one of those tricks of Providence, I suppose, that these two men—so utterly unlike in every other particular—shared one trait in common. Neither of them could bear the idea of physical chastisement of their children—by themselves. If it had to be done, it was a task for the wife.

Now, as it happened, I had first-hand (no pun intended) experience of this in my grandparents' home as well as in my own. All in all, I suppose I had as many tannings at the hands of my grandmother as I had at home from my mother. The only material difference was that my grandmother was more business-like about it. Over the big coal range in the kitchen were hung never fewer than a half-dozen birches, grim and ever-present reminders that Nemesis is no myth.

How we hated the birches man! An itinerant vendor roaming the countryside, he put in his appearance once a year, his cries of "*Wil wialen wedw*" bringing his regular customers to their doors the while we youngsters viewed the performance from hastily chosen hiding-places. Actually it should have been "*Wil wialen fedw*," but the alliteration was irresistible. How often we plotted his murder! How earnestly we prayed a vengeful God would bring him to a specially sticky end—by our prayers proving our own sense of impotence! To this day I rankle when I consider the ironic fact that the annual arrival of the birches man defined the total number of homes in which there were children as accurately as the census itself. Whoever patronized the pedlar had children, and every parent was a regular customer!

As little inclined as I am to be fair to this profiteer in instruments of castigation, I have to admit that birches did not constitute his sole stock-in-trade. Besides the artfully bound bundles of birches, he had brooms and handles to sell to childless households. But it was by his cries of "*Wil wialen wedw*" (which is Welsh for Will, the birches man) that he made his presence known,

and it was from their sale that he made the major part of his profits.

As in all Welsh farmhouses, the most used room in my grandparents' home was the *kitchen*. There were sitting-rooms elsewhere in the house, but they were used only when "company" appeared. Until bedtime, whenever my grandfather was indoors, he invariably sat in a big easy-chair in the kitchen. Sometimes—on candle-making day, for instance—when there was an unusual amount of work to be done in the kitchen, my grandmother would order her lord and master to take himself off out of the way.

"*Risiart!*" ("Richard!")

I can see her now as she confronted the great bulk of her husband in his chair. No need for her to say more. He knew by long experience what the one word signified. But, always deliberate, he would make no move. With untroubled, kindly eyes he would look at her quite as if the implied command were in fact a term of endearment.

She would say in Welsh, "Come, come," and very slowly he would bestir himself, his movements reflecting his gradual realization that argument was futile, surrender the only course. While his spouse stood facing him—a bristling fox-terrier confronting a lethargic mastiff—he would sit up and draw his massive legs under him, his great fists grasping the arms of the chair. Then, with the ponderousness of a pachyderm, he would slowly rise to his feet and walk slowly out of the room.

Once—but only once—I saw him make a hasty exit from that kitchen. I could not have been more dumbfounded if Snowdon had suddenly begun to dance a jig! The sight of that lumbering giant springing from his chair and with amazing speed departing through the back door for parts unknown—or, rather the reason for this amazing performance—brings me back to what I had to say about my inherited abhorrence of inflicting corporal punishment on my own children.

Mind you, I deserved a thrashing. I was, and I am, in no doubt about that. No youngster ever more richly deserved one. For my grandmother had spent long evenings knitting a pair of woollen stockings for me—fine, warm, thick stockings for which I should have been grateful on those chill wintry days in North Wales. *But they were of wool!* I hated them as another would hate a strait-jacket, or a hair-shirt. With my legs encased in

that scratchy wool life was a misery. So I set about the task of contriving a way to be rid of them. Eventually I hit on a scheme which gave promise of success.

Down at the waterfront was a slippery, sloping groyne over which at high tide the incoming rollers broke. Its top was covered by seaweed, always wet and springy. But beneath this, covering the sides of the groyne, were bare, jagged rocks. First I found a piece of slate—a wide flat slab that would serve as a sled. Astride this, my stockinged legs gripping the sides of the groyne until I pushed off, I slid down the slope until my feet touched the shingle beach. Then back to the top of the groyne I carried the slate to repeat the slide. Before I'd finished a dozen descents both stockings were torn beyond repair by contact with the sharp rocks. So I made my way home, my carefully rehearsed tale of an "accident" ready to my tongue.

The kitchen was all a-bustle as I stepped over the threshold. My grandmother was darting about the room like a dragon-fly. The girl was kneading bread. My grandfather was dozing in his easy-chair by the big coal range. As my grandmother caught sight of me she stopped short, eyes riveted on the dangling strands of wool festooned over my boot tops. One look at those pursed lips was enough for me. I knew my story would not save me. But somebody had to break the awful silence, more frightening even than the verbal castigation which I had fondly hoped would be all I'd get. So I told my tale at top speed—unconvincing as I realized it was.

*"Risart!"*

She cut across my hurried recital, the one word silencing me in the middle of a sentence. Also it spurred my grandfather into activity. He was out of his chair and out of the house like a flash. Of course, at the time I was much too concerned with what was in store for me to grasp the full significance of his unwonted agility, but later on I appreciated it as a near-phenomenon.

"Take down your pants," said my grandmother in Welsh, each word clipped short. Then, without looking at me, she ran across the room and took one of the birches from the row hanging over the stove.

One of the tales my mother took delight in telling us children is worthy of inclusion here, if only because it serves to dispel a



myth which has wide credence throughout North Wales. According to this legend, the clan Owen has been as immovably fixed in Snowdonia as the famous mountain itself. But, as it happens, the legend is not based on fact. Just as my own father first saw the light of day in an English city, so at least one branch of the Owen family had its homestead in Anglesey (that fertile island on the Irish sea which my sister Megan represents in Parliament).

It was the story of their migration to Caernarvonshire that my mother used to love to tell. In its way it was comparable to an epic saga of the covered-wagon days in America, devoid of fights with redskins to be sure, but none the less adventurous for all that. For if distances in Wales are a hop-skip-and-a-jump compared with the vastness of the Western Prairies, at least conditions of travel in the first half of the eighteenth century were the same. When ten miles a day is a satisfactory rate of ground coverage—and for the heavily loaded farm wagons that formed this Owen cavalcade this was as much as you could expect over the mountain roads of North Wales—a mere hundred miles is a miniature Odyssey. In those days there were no bridges, rail or road, over the Menai Straits. Cattle, sheep and horses as well as humans had to cross in ferries and flat-bottomed barges. No easy task if you know the Menai.

Apart from the sound common sense shown by this ancestor of mine—in returning to the land of his forbears, Snowdonia—the feature of that trek which my mother impressed on us as being most important had to do with an ancient Welsh custom rich in its significance. From remote times, reminiscent of the days of fire worship, Welsh migrants have always carried from the old home to the new the burning peat from the open hearth. However long the journey, this fire, carried in a brazier slung beneath the body of the wagon, must be kept alive until it can be placed in the fireplace of the new home. Only so will happiness and good fortune accompany the move. The picture of the swinging brazier, replenished again and again during the days and nights of the long trek, appealed tremendously to my boyish imagination. To this day I find myself pitying city-dwellers with all the amenities of gas and electric heaters—denied the possibility of transferring the old home's source of warmth to the new!

My mother was born on November 4, 1866, at Mynydd Ednyfed Fawr (the family farm), to which my grandparents had moved

from Dolwgan, high upon the hill above Criccieth. Through her father she could trace her descent from Owen Gwynedd, a twelfth-century Prince of Gwynedd, or North Wales. On her mother's side she was a descendant of Hywel Dda (Howell the Good), a tenth-century Prince of Wales famed as the Welsh Law-Giver. Thus, like her parents, she was *boneddiges*, the embodiment of the best in Welsh culture as it flourishes in farming families, with their code, their tradition and their roots deep in the past of the countryside. Destined to be acclaimed throughout her native land as a notable product of that entirely Welsh culture, she herself was proud to be a woman of Eifionydd—in speech, in sympathies, and in her way of thought.

Her paternal grandfather was Henry Owen of Tyddyn Adi, between Criccieth and Portmadoc, and it was through his descent from the old family of Isallt in the lovely Pennant valley, that she traced her line back to Owen Gwynedd. This twelfth-century Prince of Gwynedd figures largely in our history, and was without question a ruler of outstanding ability and strong character. English historians of the period are singularly reticent, and well they might be, for Henry II's expeditions against Owen were not covered with glory. One of these old writers confines himself to five words: "*Rex in Walliam expeditionem fecit.*" Very wise man! The expedition in question ended in appalling disaster on the slopes of the Berwyn Mountains, and Wales had a period of peace from the Normans for many a long year.

Owen Gwynedd, apart from being a fine military leader (there is no record of his ever having suffered defeat in battle), was a highly cultured patron of the poets, many of whom were resident at his Court. He reigned from 1137 to 1170 and left twenty children. His must have been a busy, crowded life!

The old province of Gwynedd roughly corresponds to what we call North Wales today, and was divided into *cantrefi* (hundreds). Eifionydd, our home, is the hundred bordering on Cardigan Bay between Pwllheli and Portmadoc. The promontory of Caernarvonshire is the hundred of Llein.

The Isallt branch of my mother's ancestors were mainly well-to-do freeholders, farming their own properties. According to the tradition of Isallt Fawr they were also descended from *Meddygon Myddfai* (the physicians of Myddfai), a breed of practitioners who got their gifts of medicine directly from their connection

with the *Tylwyth Teg* (the good fairies). Primarily herbalists, their nostrums were gathered in their gardens of herbs, and according to folk-lore, they effected cures that bordered on the magical. At any rate, I can find no other satisfactory explanation of a truly magical gift that was my mother's—her possession of the "green finger," a tale that merits and will have the telling in a more appropriate place. Enough here merely to add that these forbears of my mother's were all *bonedd gwlad* (landed gentry).

(As so often happens in translations from the Welsh, the mental picture created by this term is utterly misleading. True, the *Isallts* were gentry of the land, but they were of the earth earthy, and arrogance and class snobbishness had no place in their design for living.)

Is this reference to fairies to be taken seriously, you will perhaps ask. I assure you it is. Whatever of disillusionment life in more sophisticated lands may bring in its train, no man or woman whose childhood was spent in Snowdonia will ever scoff at something that is ingrained in their very being. In this year of our Lord 1944 you can find, on any Eifion hillside, in any dale, abundant proof of the reality of Welsh belief in fairies. Observe the ploughman, the axeman, any worker wielding an implement of metal. You will note he goes about his task with unwonted care. If you can persuade him to explain he will tell you quite seriously that he *must* take care—*lest he touch a fairy with iron!* You see, fairies were in Wales in the Stone Age, and it was only when the first invaders, equipped with iron weapons, overcame the Britons that a doubt as to their existence took root. So to this day in Snowdonia countryfolk will tell you that if you touch a fairy with iron he will disappear. And this belief is held not only by the peasants. Follow a foursome of locals around the Criccieth golf course if you are in doubt. The quartette may conceivably include a banker, a lawyer, a business man and a publican. Whoever or whatever they are, they take more than ordinary care in addressing the ball when it is in the rough!

Don't take this to mean North Wales is a land of Barrie-esque whimsy peopled by Peter Pans. According to the hard-headed business men who formed the Criccieth Urban Council over which my mother presided as chairman for three successive years, she was *cold steel*, her reasoning powers as untouched by feminine

emotionalism as King Solomon's! But from a meeting of the Council she could come home to her children to sing of the glorious beauties of Cader Idris, one of the loveliest of the hills that look down on the azure waters of Cardigan Bay.

"Whoever climbs Cader Idris at night and from the top sees the sunrise," she would tell us, "will come down either a fool or a poet."

Similarly, subtle wit was not lacking with the clan Owen. One of my mother's favourite stories had to do with an uncle of hers, a farmer who also acted on occasions as an auctioneer, Roberts by name. Once he did a good turn for the richest landowner in the community, a gentleman of wealth, named Greaves, whose wine-cellars were famous throughout North Wales. The favour consisted in his auctioning off some of the Greaves' chattels for which the lord of the manor had no further use, and from the sale of which he had not expected any appreciable sum. So, when Roberts' persuasive skill as an auctioneer brought really staggering prices for the goods, Greaves was at once dumbfounded and delighted by the sum realized.

"This calls for a celebration," he told Roberts; "you must come up to the house this evening and let me express my gratitude in a fitting manner."

And when Roberts duly arrived and was ensconced in an easy-chair in the Greaves manor-house, his host produced a bottle of liqueur brandy, a priceless brand never meant to see the light of day except at wedding or baptismal celebrations. Of course, and understandingly, Greaves expounded the virtues of the liquid gold at no inconsiderable length, explaining that it had lain in the cellars of an old *Plas* not many miles distant for an incredible number of years. He then, much to Roberts' chagrin, produced two very minute glasses and a carafe of water and tumblers. Having carefully poured out the thimbleful of the precious fluid, he explained that in order to savour the bouquet to the full, one should sip it very slowly and then drink a glass of water. This performance was repeated at what Roberts considered to be rather long intervals, perhaps three times, when he rose to go.

"I thank you, Mr. Greaves, for a most enjoyable evening, and your old liqueur brandy is the best I have ever tasted; but I must say this—it is very small for its age."

He was in many ways an exceptional character this old uncle of mine; he had a very solemn, serious face, but people used to

flock to his auction sales to listen to his patter and his wit, and you had need to get up very early in the morning to get the better of Henry Roberts, Pensyflog. He was a very well-read man and an exceptionally fine Shakespearian scholar. My mother was very fond of him, although he teased her and pulled her leg unmercifully. His sister, Dorothy Roberts, I shall speak about in another connection. She was much quieter, and had a greater depth of human understanding, than her brother.

And this calls to mind—although it is in no way related to that episode—another inherited trait of my mother's, the ability to understand and be sympathetic towards the non-understandable. Everyone in Criccieth except my mother and the object of her sympathy was profoundly relieved by the death of a motherless imbecile child. But the father was inconsolable in his grief. It was worse than useless to try to show him how much better it was—for him as well as for the baby—that an all-wise God had cut short its wretched life. Such well-meaning attempts to lessen his grief having proved unavailing, Criccieth left the poor man to grieve alone. And it was then my mother stepped into the breach.

Meeting him in the High Street, she stopped him and in a few minutes worked the miracle of miracles—restoring faith in the heart of the man until then full of hate of God. She said nothing about the child's imbecility, about its being better off dead than to have gone through life only half alive. Instead, she spoke of the poor little thing quite as if it had been normal—as if a promising career had been cut short by a cruel fate. And then she added the crowning touch that put him on a level footing with her, and lent the dignity of normality to the dead infant.

"You see," she said, "I can sympathize with you because I, too, lost a child of mine—a blow which it was not easy to believe could be struck by a just God. But in the years that have passed since then I have come to realize God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform, and it is not for us to question the wisdom of His ways. At least your baby is safe in His keeping now, and for you life still holds much that is good."

And that marked the end of the father's grieving.

### CHAPTER III

*Tair deddf gweithredoedd dyn:  
a waharddo yn arall,  
a geisio yn arall,  
ac ni waeth ganddo ba wedd y  
bo gan arall.*

That deed unto thyself forbid  
Thou in another wouldst have chid;  
That action of thyself require  
Thou from another wouldst desire.

BARDIC.

NOSTALGIA is, I realize, a state of mind shared by others besides the Welsh. But no one whom I have ever known experienced such pangs of homesickness as did my mother when she was forced to leave the land of her birth. More than once I drove her from London to Criccieth by motor-car, and each time marvelled at the amazing change that transformed her as we crossed the England-Wales border. Although to the end of her days she was intensely alive and full of fire, our leaving England behind and entering Wales never failed to work an instantaneous and stunning revitalization in her. You could fairly see the years vanish before the coming of an expression of ineffable joy in her dear eyes. Once again the cares and anxieties of the statesman's wife were tossed aside like the shedding of a suit of heavy armour and there emerged the vibrant, joyous country girl with ready laughter on her lips and gleeful music in her heart. Nor was this to be accounted for by insufficient experience of other lands.

Washington and Rio, Paris, Lisbon, Ceylon, Dresden, Strasbourg and the French Riviera, all these she had visited, and under favouring circumstances. Always, wherever she went, she was fêted. Also, being a grand sailor, she thoroughly enjoyed the ocean voyages. But all these places had one fault in common, a fault of which London was equally guilty. *They were not Welsh.*

Was she, then, stupidly parochial, blinded by prejudice to the good things of the world outside her native land? In refuting such a charge I admit I, too, may be guilty of equal parochialism. As her advocate it may be rightly said I am as partisan in my love of Wales as was she. But since when was love of one's own country reprehensible? At any rate, I make no apologies for presenting as full justification for my mother's (and my own) insularity a word-picture of her (and my) birthplace.

On one of the many lovely hillsides on the south coast of Caernarvonshire my mother first saw the light of day. These verdant, tree-embellished hills form a horse-shoe in which is a bay about seven miles across with the twin castles of Harlech and Criccieth standing sentinel. Remarkable in many respects, it even has the distinction of bearing two names! It is equally Criccieth Bay or Portmadoc Bay, according to your whereabouts. If you ask its name in Criccieth you get one answer. In Portmadoc, a bit more than four miles distant, you will get the other. But by any name its loveliness is beyond dispute. I know the beauty of the Mediterranean. I concede the fact that the Bay of Naples is of breath-taking beauty, but Criccieth Bay is remarkable for something more than its beauty. Once upon a time, according to an ancient legend, this expanse of azure-blue water was dry land on which stood a city called *Cantref Gwaelod*, which means the City of the Plains, immortalized in Thomas Peacock's classic. To this day, when the tide is very low, you can see some of the foundation-stones of the submerged city that was. So at my mother's doorstep, as it were, was Mystery with a capital M—her very own Atlantis about which to weave enthralling day-dreams.

From the bay on three sides, the foothills rise tier by tier, a vast amphitheatre of dazzling green, embracing the dancing sea of turquoise blue. Dotted about on the verdant slopes are scores of snug little farmhouses with their sheep-runs which produce the best lamb and mutton in the world—a statement which no gourmet will refute. Behind these foothills towers the majestic range of Snowdonia, Snowdon itself, Carnedd Dafydd, Carnedd Llewelyn and tens of other monarchs. Here is a landscape to sublimate the soul of the artist quite as it must fill the dullest clod with awe. Here are innumerable lakes and little streams alive with delicious brown trout and an occasional salmon.

By visiting scribblers, unmindful of the odiousness of comparisons and, in this case, its fatuity, Snowdonia is frequently likened to a miniature Switzerland. It is not only inapt; it is bad taste, as bad as the hoary joke about the Swiss Navy. After all, Criccieth Bay could provide anchorage for a sea-going fleet. (It not only could; it did in my mother's time.)

This, then, was the world into which my mother was born just after the close of America's Civil War—a beautiful, placid, dignified world of which the centre was her father's farm, high

above the bay and commanding an inspiring view of the Caernarvonshire and Merionethshire mountains. Not only from her ancient ancestors and parents, but from this ennobling environment she inherited the great qualities that went to form her character. An only child, she was much in the society of her elders, who lavished love upon her and encouraged her flights of childish imagery. So they saw how from the great mountains she acquired strength and dignity. From the lesser hills she learned tolerance and from the little tumbling hummocks and streams that went down to the sea she found her unquenchable sense of humour.

In other lands, I know, a hundred-acre farm is small potatoes, but in Caernarvonshire there are few larger holdings—and my grandfather amassed a comfortable fortune from his successful sheep and cattle raising. Nor was farming his only interest.

From Portmadoc in those days fleets of sailing ships (chiefly schooners of from 100 to 200 tons) made regular voyages to far-distant ports. As a boy I have counted as many as thirty of these little windjammers making their way in and out of the bay at one time. Outward bound they all carried slates, quarried from the near-by mountains, and world-famous for their lasting qualities. These they would take to such distant ports as Hamburg, Stettin, Bremen. There, having discharged the cargo, they would take on coal for delivery in an Italian port. In Leghorn, say, the new cargo would invariably be salt, with which they would then cross the Atlantic to Newfoundland. Arrived there and having discharged the salt, they would fill up with dried codfish and set a course for home.

With her father's help my mother made these long, perilous voyages in her imagination, in this fashion acquiring a knowledge of geography that early broadened her mind as no amount of conventional school teaching could have accomplished. It was not only the adventurousness of these Welsh sailormen that appealed to my mother; there was pride of ownership involved. This is what I mean when I say that farming was not my grandfather's only source of income.

Portmadoc, you see, was not only the home port of these tiny deep-water craft; they were actually built in shipyards there. (And beautifully made they were.) Now the builders had a curious way of capitalizing their business. Instead of forming a stock company and selling shares to the public, they reckoned the



value of a ship in inches. Say she was a vessel with a water-line of 100 feet, she would be divided into 1200 inches, and you could buy an inch or more of her at so much an inch. As a boy, while Portmadoc was still a busy port, I can remember my mother's glee as she pointed to a departing or inward-bound vessel and laughingly announced that she owned two-and-three-eighths inches of her! (A day was to come when she would own "inches" of many different kinds of profit-making companies, but that is another story.)

Although they had begun to call it the age of steam even before my mother's birth, the railway did not come through to Criccieth until 1865. As for my mother's father, his own two legs could take him wherever he chose to go. Once a year, every year, it suited his purpose to ride horseback the three-hundred-odd miles to London! He not only made the return journey the same way; the long trek to town found him driving several thousand head of his own and his neighbours' sheep and cattle—to sell at Barnet Fair as well as at various places *en route*. A preliminary feature of that annual cavalcade which appealed strongly to my mother's sense of humour was the preparation of the cattle. To the local blacksmith they all were driven, and there they were shod like horses. At that, they were comical—all at sea with the unaccustomed iron shoes that they tried in vain to kick off! Actually my grandfather knew what he was about. Those shoes on his cattle saved their hooves from being worn down to the quick—a painful business that cost unshod cattle pounds of their original weight.

Of my mother's five children I am the only one whose childhood was spent in the environment which my mother had known as a girl. Indeed, the life into which I was born was in all essentials the same life that a dozen generations of my ancestors had known. I am therefore well fitted to describe from first-hand knowledge what that life was like. Although, as I have said, Welsh farms are small, the farmhouses are often isolated, the nearest neighbour sometimes a mile or so away. This is due to the custom of allowing a farmer to run his sheep over a big tract of mountain-land adjoining his own property. Nowadays, I believe, sheep-farmers pay a rental (generally 7s. 6d. per head) to the owner of winter pasturage in the low lands where the lambs get the benefit of the less severe climate. But in the spring, when they are classed as yearlings, they are driven back up into the mountains. The

mountain pasturage is not only good, the sheep keep healthy by having to keep on the move for their grazing.

All these old Welsh farmhouses are much alike, just as the cultivated parts of the land are of the same character. The one in which I spent many joyous days in my boyhood was owned by my grandmother's brother, William Jones. It was called Derwyn Fawr, and in my eyes it seemed to be as old as the very mountains themselves. The farm was beautifully situated on a hillside at the foot of which ran a little stream that was then alive with (and still contains, I believe) trout.

Judged by modern trade-union standards, the conditions under which farm labourers worked in those days, fifty years ago, were onerous. The hours were long and the work hard, but the food was excellent and plentiful, the men were hardy and the picture of robust health. If, viewed with 1944 eyes, the pay was pitifully small, it was, at any rate, more than enough for the men's needs. For the only one of the farm labourers allowed to go home over the week-end was the hwsmon (a corruption of horseman and, in fact, the foreman). The others slept in the loft above the stable—a fascinating place, always beautifully warm and smelly! Also it was mysteriously dark. As a small boy I was always trying to wangle a night in the *llofft stabal*.

The men's meals were served in the farm kitchen, where the great peat-fire was never allowed to go out the year around. To make continuous stoking possible, an enormous stack of the earth-like fuel was kept in a special storeroom behind the kitchen. Almost everything that appeared on the table was home-made. When it was decided to kill a young heifer or a bullock, contact was made with the neighbours and arrangements made for distributing as much of the fresh meat as they required. When these requirements had been met, the remainder was pickled in brine. Nothing more wholesome and delicious have I ever tasted, especially when accompanied by home-grown carrots, swedes, onions and other vegetables. Milk, butter and eggs were, of course, plentiful. The dairy—a marvel of cleanliness—was under the supervision of my great-aunt.

(Which reminds me that my mother, for all her upbringing as a farmer's daughter, could not stand the taste of milk. Throughout her long life, after passing her babyhood, she never had a drop of milk, either alone or in tea or coffee.)

All the farm machinery, including the butter churns, was driven by power generated by a huge water-wheel. Naturally, the great creaking contraption fascinated me. I remember being chased away from it time after time lest my small fingers got tangled up in the cog-wheels. Cheese-making came with the flush of milk in the spring and early summer when the grass was new and most lush. This farmhouse cheese, called *caws cartref*, is matured under enormous pressure in containers piled high with huge stones. Although I have never tasted a cheese as delicious as *caws cartref*, it has never had any appreciable sale, even in Wales. Virtually, every ounce of it is consumed in the farmhouse where it is made. There were no separators in those days, the whole milk being ripened and churned. The residue, buttermilk, was our staple drink on the farm. Gallons and gallons of this, with handfuls of oatmeal thrown in, were consumed in the hot weather of hay-making and harvest times.

One of the drawbacks of these isolated old farmhouses was that the boys and girls had no suitable place in which to do their courting. Cinemas and dance-halls were unknown, and in any event distances were too great and transport facilities too limited to allow the young folks of the farming districts to get together in the towns. Obviously and naturally, the difficulty was overcome. From time immemorial there had existed a custom (I believe it still exists) known as *caru gwely*, which, roughly translated, means love-making in bed. Tradition made it quite in order for a young farm labourer to descend from the stable loft, get a ladder from the nearest rick-yard, and with its aid climb to his sweetheart's bedroom window. So they spent hours of bliss in each other's arms. I understand this custom prevails in districts of Southern Germany and Austria. Also in the mountainous regions of Kentucky and Tennessee I believe a similar form of courting is known as *bundling*. In Wales, at least, the custom was never abused, the swain being in honour bound to behave himself with due regard to the proprieties.

Altogether, Derwyn Fawr was a very happy, self-contained community ruled over by a benevolent and humorous master. It was this great-uncle of mine whom I have already said my brother Gwilym so strongly resembles. . Actually, old William Jones has come to life a second time in the person of my brother. As a small boy, Gwilym was much in the society of his great-

uncle, who was very fond of him. My mother used often to say that his influence, both direct and hereditary, had much to do with my brother's success in the House of Commons. Those were the days when these farming folk had only themselves to rely on for entertainment, and when my great-uncle was on hand there was never any lack of that. Now and again some of his jokes bordered on the *risqué*, not quite the right thing for young ears. When that happened, my very attractive and forceful great-aunt would sail in with a peremptory "William!"

Never having been able myself to understand the possibility of "opposites" attracting one another, I find it easy to account for my mother's passionate love of Wales and the Welsh people. For these were *her* people in the literal sense of the word. They and she thought alike, were alike. That admonitory "William!" connoted precisely the same degree of disapproval as my grandmother's "Richard!"—and was voiced in exactly the same incisive, effective tone. So in my mother's case, whether her husband or one of her children was the offender, it was quite enough for her to utter our given name (as an exclamation) for us to stop misbehaving.

And here I wish to qualify what I have had to say about my mother's being equally at home in the humblest farm or miner's cottage and a Palace or a White House. It is not a recantation of that statement for me to add that she found greater happiness among the simple country folk of her own Caernarvonshire than in the society of world notables. Her Welsh, like her English, was perfect, but for all other languages she had no use. Of all the countless, inanimate things that claimed her love, none could compare with Brynawelon, her home in Criccieth. Brynawelon (the Hill of the Breezes) was her own choice of name—like everything else inside and outside the house. Every tree and shrub was planted either by her or under her supervision. The layout of the lawns and flower-gardens, the placing of the tennis-court, the course of the curving driveway from the entrance gates to the front door of the house, were all determined by her. Similarly, the architect drew the plans of the house in accord with her wishes. So here in reality was a materialization of the fabled edifice of the nursery rhyme, "This is the house that Jack built."

When, in due course, my mother discovered to her dismay that she had overlooked the matter of a cellar under her house, it did

not make her love the place one whit less. Also, the necessity of making additions to the original inadequate building did not serve to modify her conviction that Brynawelon was the loveliest and happiest abode in all the world. How much she loved it was made frequently apparent when circumstances compelled her to spend most of her time in London. On the slightest pretext—and I have always had an idea some of them were manufactured—she would skedaddle off to Criccieth and Brynawelon. (Actually Brynawelon is like the Biblical house—it is built on a rock. Excavation for a cellar would have been most difficult.)

Embellishing the grounds with flower-beds was one of her chief occupations. It was, indeed, her love of all forms of growing plants that had much to do with one of her most treasured friendships. For many years she enjoyed the great distinction of being on terms of intimacy with Her Majesty Queen Mary, whose love of flowers in their natural setting matched my mother's. But my mother was not merely content to enjoy their beauty. She found even greater joy in making them grow and thrive. Fortunately she was blessed with a *green finger*—an expression common in England as well as in Wales, but unknown, I am told, in the United States. (For the benefit of American readers, then, the possessor of a green finger has the gift of restoring to life apparently dead floral cuttings.)

Of course, she was for ever being called upon to “open” charity bazaars and to preside at church and civic festivals. And invariably at such functions the presentation of a bouquet was to be taken for granted. On her arrival at home from one of these affairs the first thing she would do would be to make for the greenhouse. Here she would snip off little shoots from the bouquet and stick them into a flower-pot. I often watched her do this and frequently expressed my conviction that the drooping, wilted stalks could never be made to take root. But they always did! When, eventually, I tried to do it I found it impossible!

From the South of France, where she was a frequent visitor, she would come back to Brynawelon with an amazing collection of seemingly lifeless sprigs and shoots and cuttings of all kinds. When *she* planted them, they all grew and bloomed. Once, I remember, she arrived with hundreds of dried-up, barren-looking twigs about six inches long which she explained she had collected when the hedges were being trimmed in the hotel grounds on

the Riviera. With these unpromising bits of apparently dead wood she announced she would make a hedge to line the driveway from our garage to the entrance gates. In spite of her past record as a wonder-worker, I was certain this time she had bitten off more than she could chew. Nor was I alone in this opinion!

The morning following her return my father took a walk through the grounds before breakfast. His eyes lighted on the hundreds of little dried shoots stuck in the ground beside the driveway. When he came in to breakfast he was the personification of scepticism.

"Maggie," he said, "what on earth are those little sticks along the drive?"

"I propose," she replied, "to have a hedge like the one in the hotel grounds at Nice."

My father laughed uproariously at this, and when he had thus expressed his utter disbelief he made the costly error of translating it into terms of £.s.d.

"Stuff and nonsense!" he said. "Why, I'll give you half a crown for every one that grows!" And at the time it did seem a safe enough offer to make.

*But every one of those sticks grew!* Today it rivals in vigour and beauty that parent hedge at Nice.

So my father found himself landed with a colossal bill. However, he faced up to it like a man, even paying a bit over the odds by the purchase of a costly piece of jewellery.

Besides the amusing phase of this incident, it seems to me to have a distinct connection with the Welsh *saw* which heads this chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

*Tri chyrtefigaeth gwynfyd:  
annrwg, aneisiau, ac annarfod.*

In the realm where bliss doth reign,  
We first from three things freedom gain:  
Penury, and death, and pain.

“EVERY generalization is fallacious—including *this one!*” The identity of the wit who gave voice to this amusing thought is not within my ken, and I regret it. I should like to sing his praises. While I realize it is merely another way of saying that the rule is proved by its exceptions and that to paraphrase an existing maxim lacks the merit of originality, my inherited sense of humour is titivated by this facetious twist of the aphorism. All my life I have enjoyed nothing more than the sight of a pompous pundit being made to look ridiculous—whether by a clever riposte or by a banana-skin-induced tumble! Wherefore I am chary of indulging in generalizations.

With this said, however, I have no hesitation in declaring that the happiness which my mother so lavishly gave to all with whom she came in contact is the prime factor in the meaninglessness of her death. Not only her family, everyone who knew her in the flesh will tell you her kindly, happy spirit will for ever live. As with this “freedom” from death referred to in the ancient Welsh saying that heads this chapter, so her incomparable ability to spread happiness broadcast made our home no less “blissful” when the need for stringent economy, if not “penury,” was a grim reality than in the later years when money worries vanished. Indeed, of all her children, I am probably the only one (because I was the first-born) who has an active recollection of those early days when balancing the family budget was undoubtedly an anxious business for my mother.

I stress the sunny side of my mother’s character because it seems to me to be the most enduring of all her spiritual qualities. And this in turn leads me to a contemplation of the few things—physical as well as spiritual—that are enduring. In her beloved Wales there are, of course, the changeless, time-defying mountains. There, in truth, men can be unashamedly reverent when they say a thing is *as old as the hills*.

The hill under whose summit my mother was born was also

my birthplace. Like many another in North Wales, this especial hill, called Eðnyfed, is rich in tradition. The reason the big stone farmhouse was built just short of its crest—a mere century and a half ago—had nothing to do with the accidental fact that from its front windows a view unfolds itself of mingled land and seascape such as my eyes have never beheld elsewhere. Life—for the nineteenth-century farmer in Wales—was far too real and earnest for him to indulge in considerations of scenic beauty when it came to building his home. *Utility and safety* were the two essentials. In fact, it was the second consideration that accounted for the choice of site for the Owen home. At the time it was built, in the last year of the eighteenth century, the threat of a Napoleonic invasion was uppermost in Welsh, as it was in English minds. For such an invasion the sandy shores of Criccieth Bay were ideal. It actually happened in 1797 at Fishguard, in Pembrokeshire, where the French landed. To descendants of fighting men who, in their day, had fought the Saxon and the Roman invaders, it was second nature to order their lives in such a fashion as to be able again to smash the ambitions of the new would-be-conqueror. So the house was built where its occupants could command the widest possible stretch of coastline *and, five hundred feet above it*, make storming it a costly business. In effect, during that anxious period it was as much a watch-tower as it was a house.

Today a large part of my grandfather's farm, altered beyond recognition, has been taken over by the Criccieth Golf Club, the eighteenth tee on the very summit of the hill. But on the fairways the descendants of my grandfather's sheep continue to graze and wax fat while—in accordance with the increased acreage edicts of the Government—other parts of the farm that never before knew the feel of a plough are under cultivation. (Armchair critics of the Government are numerous enough without my adding to the number, but it is difficult for me to grasp the reason for diverting excellent, improved pasturage for livestock into questionable tillage. Ploughing and cultivating and harvesting on almost precipitous slopes—on which sure-footed Welsh sheep and cattle prosper exceedingly—seem to me indefensibly uneconomic. But, with that said, I have seen with my own eyes in this fifth year of war stands of oats and barley, fields of swedes and potatoes, that foretell of bumper crops. But, handicapped as



all farmers are in these days by a shortage of labour, it does seem to me that the nation's larder would be better and more abundantly filled if the hillside farms of Wales were devoted to producing meat.)

Derwyn Fawr, my great-uncle's farm to which I have referred, was even richer in tradition than my birthplace. The house itself dates back to 1500, and, like so many North Wales homesteads, stands on a height from which an enormous stretch of country can be seen. On a clear day the winding road to Caernarvon, ten miles away, is visible. Again, this building's site was not accidentally chosen. Watchers in Derwyn Fawr could see the very start of any raiding party that might fare forth from Caernarvon Castle on loot and pillage bent. With such forewarning there would be ample time for the defending forces to gather in their might and prepare for battle against the Constable. Incidentally, my father happens to be the present one.

How, you may ask, could a background like this produce a happy, laughter-loving optimist such as my mother was. By way of an irrefutable answer I call your attention to present-day Britons who have survived the wholesale slaughter that rained from the skies in 1940-41. At the height of the terror the ordinary people of this extraordinary island were neither cowed nor, vastly more important, did they lose their sense of humour. So, I am sure, it must have been in those other far-off days. We are all too prone to assume that because these earlier folk lived under a continuous threat of danger at the hands of both domestic and foreign foes, they could find no time for happiness and laughter. Certainly my mother's forbears must have included many real comedians. And I am convinced the hills and dales of ancient Wales echoed with their laughter.

I am equally sure no greater happiness ever settled upon a farmer's home than that which came hand-in-hand with my mother's birth. At a time when large families were taken for granted no one could have been expected to guess that this infant was destined to be an only child. But if she had had the usual number of brothers and sisters I am certain she would have remained the beneficiary of her parent's unbounded love. As it was, regrettable as is the lot of an only child in so many ways, the love that was centred upon her had much to do with her own unfathomable depths of affection which later she was to give to all and sundry with unparalleled prodigality.

As a young girl she showed no inclination to become an expert horsewoman like her mother. Indeed, she evinced no interest in any form of outdoor sport. (Throughout her long life she had no liking for sports of any kind, although on occasions she was a spectator at the centre court at Wimbledon, and was on friendly terms with several of the champion tennis-players. Also, when we lived at Walton Heath, she often entertained notable golfers. But when she attempted to hit a golf ball with a club she just dissolved in laughter! But she was overjoyed at the triumph of Wales over the invincible New Zealand All Blacks in 1905, and she took delight in the magnificent ring feats of peerless little Jimmy Wilde.) The only thing that appealed to her as a girl was to go sailing in the bay with friendly fishermen or anyone who would take her on board. (In later years she did a lot of sailing in a cutter that belonged to Gwilym. The rougher the sea the better she liked it, often being the only one on board not miserably sea-sick.)

Of course, in that mid-Victorian era of wasp waists and long skirts active participation in sports was not only well-nigh impossible for a girl; it was not regarded as ladylike. But had the shorts and muscular development of the modern Miss been *de rigueur* during my mother's girlhood, I am sure she would have still taken no part in any form of sport. Instead, even before she entered her teens, she was beginning to show a love of and no inconsiderable talent for painting. Several of her pictures in watercolour and oils are among the most treasured heirlooms of my family. If, instead of marriage and motherhood, she had chosen to concentrate on an artist's career, I believe she would have won recognition as a painter of outstanding ability. Actually, she made the job of mothering us and fulfilling her many duties as a politician's wife a whole-time business. The paint-brushes were put aside, never again to be used.

During her childhood her parents left her at home while they went off on their annual holidays. But on their return my mother always had a lively account of what had befallen them from her vivacious mother. One such tale she used to love to tell us—years after the happening. In its own way it was a gem of slapstick comedy.

To get the picture it must be remembered that the custom of the times demanded that holiday-makers array themselves in

their Sunday best—in sharp contrast to the sweaters and shorts of modern hikers. This meant my grandfather's donning his black frock-coat of broadcloth, a garment of iron-wearing quality which was supposed to (and generally did) last a lifetime of Sundays and holidays. No matter how high the thermometer, nor how arduous the pleasure excursion, convention compelled the wearing not only of that stifling hot coat, but also the flat-topped, black hat of the gentleman farmer as well. Equally punctilious in matters sartorial, my grandmother invariably wore her very best gown of rustling black silk, its voluminous skirt sweeping the ground, the stiff, high neck-band with its edge of ruching tightly constricting her neck. Thus attired, on the fateful occasion that was destined to become a classic family joke in after years, they drove away on what could aptly be termed the epitome of busmen's holidays.

For, primarily, one part of North Wales is quite like any other part—topographically and ethnologically. Indeed, if these mountain folk had made the usual reason for a holiday—the need of a change of scene—they would have had to travel for weeks in those days of horse-drawn transport. So, in fact, my grandparents perforce exchanged one hilly region for another. Wherever they elected to go, even the landmarks and beauty spots were always the same. Besides the old farmhouses perched on the summits of steep mountains, there were also many *dinasoedd* (watch-towers of stone) scattered about the landscape, further reminders of those far-off days of ever-impending incursions by the robber barons. And, of course, my energetic grandmother always insisted on scaling the precipitous heights on which these *dinasoedd* were built. Equally, of course, my grandfather had no alternative to accompanying her—no easy feat even for a man of his prodigious strength, for he must have weighed all of seventeen stone.

Well, on this occasion the climb to the top of Dinas Bran was more than usually long and steep and slippery. Also, a summer sun was blazing in a cloudless sky, the temperature in the eighties. As always, my grandmother took the lead and set the pace. Her tiny feet fairly danced their way up the grass-covered slope, the ascent as easy for her as it was for the startled rabbits that scampered off at her approach. Meanwhile the toiling giant behind her found it more and more difficult to lift his aching feet. You can imagine his relief, then, when his high-spirited, tireless spouse stopped



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CRICCIETH, FROM THE GOLF LINKS  
Mynydd Ednyfed Fawr in the foreground



half-way up the hill and waited for him to come abreast of her.

"Shall we sit down for a bit, Richard?" she said.

The promptness with which he sank on to the turf was an all-sufficient answer. So my grandmother perched gracefully on a little mound near-by him. After a minute or two, while he got his breath back, he produced his well-beloved pipe and started to fill it. This was *his* idea of hill-climbing—lazily reclining on the sweet-smelling grass and having a quiet smoke! But before he had time to light his briar a scream of pain from my grandmother cut short that operation. Leaping to her feet, she jumped up and down, shaking herself vigorously.

"Something's biting me," she said in Welsh.

And it was all too true. That mound was an ant-hill, its occupants showing their resentment in their own unmistakable way. So that was the end of that wayside halt, my grandmother insisting on their continuing to the top of the hill—ants or no ants! And off she went faster than ever, her faithful spouse bringing up the rear resignedly.

Even nature, it seemed, conspired to keep my grandmother for ever on the move—and to deny my grandfather even momentary rest!

Holidays like that would appear to come under the head of hard work. Certainly life on a hillside farm in North Wales meant unremitting toil. Not only was each farm self-contained in the matter of its provender; almost every other needful thing was home-made. Thus one or more days each year found the indoors staff busy with candle- and taper-making, the former for illumination, the latter serving as spills with which to light fires and pipes. The chief ingredient was molten tallow, the odour of which permeated every nook and cranny of the big house. But the actual process intrigued me as a boy quite as it had done in the case of my mother as a girl. For the candle a length of string was used for a wick, dipping it into the mutton fat time after time until it was of the required thickness. For the tapers, a sliver was stripped off a rush, about one-sixteenth of an inch wide. The cellular structure of this sponge-like reed absorbed the tallow, and for this reason was even better than the candle-wick of string. I can quite understand, incidentally, my grandfather's alacrity in obeying my grandmother's command to leave

his easy-chair and get out of the kitchen on this day. To remove oneself as far as possible from the foul stench was certainly no hardship.

Finally, to shed further light on my mother's home environment, and on the qualities she inherited from her parents, I include here an episode which actually took place several years after her marriage. Undoubtedly, similar incidents marked her home life during her girlhood, but this is the only one she told me about.

It seems there was an old fellow in Criccieth who eked out a scanty living by a metaphorical carrying of coals to Newcastle—travelling about the hills, trying to sell cuts of beef and mutton to the farmers. Now not only was there little demand by the sheep and cattle men for this old fellow's stock-in-trade; to have called him a butcher would have been euphemistic. From all accounts, indeed, I should say he was more than somewhat simple. However this may be, my grandparents were among his few regular customers, although they had as little reason to buy meat as any of their neighbours. But it is a long hard pull up the hill from Criccieth, and when he pulled up his jaded horse at the roadside, a hundred yards from the house, and gave tongue to his butcher's cry, sympathy overruled common sense. Either my grandfather or grandmother would take a look at what he had to offer and make some purchase.

Then one day the police descended on his little yard and found positive proof of his being what for a considerable period he had been suspected of being—a thief! Caught red-handed in the act of skinning a sheep whose pelt and ears bore the marks of a local farmer, he had no choice except to admit his guilt. Nor could he plead that this was his only transgression. By the ear slits and pelt markings on other sheep-skins found on the premises, it was obvious that all of his meat had been stolen from near-by farms—to many of which he would presently have been offering it for sale! Naturally, his arrest and trial afforded the community a deal of excitement, some hot-heads going so far as to suggest the proper penalty for sheep-stealing was what it used to be, capital punishment. But generally the people decided justice had been done when the poor old fellow was sentenced to imprisonment for nine months. None of this would have much mattered, or been worthy of inclusion here, had it not been for the aftermath . . . about which my mother used to love to tell.

Not long after his release from prison and his reappearance in the village the old man managed to scrape enough money together to pay for a carcase or two of local mutton. Apparently it did not occur to him that anyone would hold the view that he had not expiated his crime. Simple-minded as he was, he took it for granted he could start again from where perforce he had left off. And of all his former regular customers none seemed to him more likely to deal with him again than my grandparents. So it was to them he went with his fresh cuts of legitimately procured meat.

My grandfather was in his accustomed place by the kitchen fire, my grandmother bustling about the room helping the cook prepare the midday meal, when the familiar cry of the quasi-butcher came to their ears.

My grandfather got to his feet and made for the door. After a moment he turned and eyed his wife apprehensively.

"It's William the butcher," he said.

"Good gracious!" said my grandmother. "What cheek! As if anybody would deal with him! Tell him to be off, Richard!"

"Now then, Mary, remember what it says in the Bible. He's done his time, and we ought to be forgiving."

Of course my grandmother could find no answer to that. She was every whit as devout a churchgoer as he was—and knew her Bible as well as he did. She was wrong and he was right, and she knew it. More important, she knew he knew she knew it. It was that realization that made her turn abruptly from the door and pitter-patter across the room to resume her interrupted task.

"B-r-r-r-r!" she snapped. "Go on, then, and be soft! Go out and buy the meat!"

And, of course, this is what my grandfather did!

Now, in retrospect, I regard my mother's telling us that story as proof of her having more than ordinary introspectiveness. As the sole offspring of these two so different and so characterful personalities she must have realized how conflicting were the qualities she had inherited from them. I truly believe one of the reasons she liked to relive that episode was to keep fresh in her mind the inherited tendency, on the one hand to be "soft," and on the other to be unforgiving and intolerant. In fact, her whole life was filled with countless instances of boundless charity and kindness and sympathy for the under-dog. But in business



matters, and she engaged in business to a far greater extent than almost anyone ever dreamed she did, she was never "soft." In many ways her heart may have ruled her head—but never in a business transaction.

But to come back to her girlhood days, for straying from which I apologize, I find in her first remove from Criccieth evidence of the great ambition that filled her parents at that time. Now that she was entering her teens it probably had been borne in upon them both that their daughter was destined to have no brothers or sisters. This apart, no parents had better grounds for believing their child had in her the makings of a great woman. Themselves totally lacking in the airs and graces of the cosmopolite, and without more than the rudiments of "book learning," they were determined that their child should have all the advantages which had been denied them. So, by way of a beginning, and with what heart-burning reluctance one can only surmise, they decided to put her in a school where she could learn the refinements of academic culture of which they were utterly ignorant.

After consulting their best-informed friends, followed by long, anxious hours of sifting the advice thus obtained, they finally decided to send the child to Dr. Williams' School for Girls in Dolgelley, the first boarding pupil to be taken into that noted seminary. Although it is only a little more than thirty miles from Criccieth to Dolgelley, it must have seemed to parents and child an immense distance. There was more in it than mere mileage. The whole country was shocked in 1879 by the terrible Tay Bridge disaster, described in Cronin's fine novel, *Hatter's Castle*. Now this may seem to have no connection with my mother's journeys to and from Dolgelley, but to get there she had to cross the estuary at Barmouth. A single-track railway bridge about half a mile long had been built across the mouth of the river in 1868-69. It was timber-built and exposed to the terrible south-west gales which we experience in late autumn and winter. After the dire news from the Tay, folk were naturally very scared of the wooden bridge; however, the old bridge still stands. It can be understood more easily, then, how many heart-searchings my grandfather and grandmother underwent before sending their only child to Dolgelley, knowing she would have to cross Barmouth Bridge at least six times a year.

## CHAPTER V

*Tri pheth a ddŷly dyn  
ei ystyried; o ba le y  
daeth, yn mha le y mae,  
ac i ba le y'r el.*

Man well on three things thought  
bestows,  
Whence is he? Where? and,  
Whither goes?

DURING the years at school in Dolgelley my mother, like all her schoolmates, had nothing whatever to do with the boys of the neighbourhood. There were, in those prim Victorian days, no school dances to which boys were invited. There were no opportunities of any kind for the girls to meet the boys. So, during my mother's girlhood she never had even a mild affair. Undoubtedly, at home in Criccieth, she could have had scores of beaux if she had been so inclined. For she was not only attractive, even as a girl she radiated that irresistible charm that in later years was to make her universally loved. But, there being no evidence to the contrary, I am convinced that in the heart of the adolescent girl romance found no footing.

For one thing, she was devoted to her parents, whose great love she returned in full measure. Nor were they the sole objects of her affection. Perhaps dearer to her than anyone except her father and mother was an aunt, her father's cousin, Dorothy Roberts of Penstumlllyn, a lady of great character and culture. From an early age my mother had confided all her childish problems to this aunt, and had come to look upon her as the wisest of counsellors. Looking back from this distance, I cannot escape the feeling that fate had a hand in this close relationship. For a day was to come when my mother's whole life would hinge on her aunt's advice. It is even open to question that the course of English history might have been changed had this dear friendship not played such a large part in my mother's girlhood. Then, too, there was Margiad, the faithful servant whose love of my mother bordered on adoration. She, too, played a not unimportant part in the proceedings which, without exaggeration, can be termed historic.

Her great-heartedness, her innate kindness, her quick responsiveness to those in need of human affection—these were qualities that were hers in abundance. And, added together, they

spelt a nature whose *leitmotif* was love. But until she blossomed into womanhood she found quite enough opportunity for expressing her love—in the persons of those nearest and dearest to her, with the hills and streams and merry waters of the bay on which to bestow any excess of the tender emotion. Above all, there was her church, the little chapel in which her father was senior deacon and a tower of strength. If, then, she arrived at maturity heart-whole and fancy-free, it is not to say that hers had been a loveless girlhood. Except that the element of sex involved in boy-and-girl courtships had never intruded into her life, in all other respects she knew the incomparable happiness that comes from loving and being loved.

Again without evidence to the contrary, I take it for granted her parents were pleased, rather than disturbed, by her displaying no interest in the potential swains of the community. After all, devoutly religious as they were, they were human. Being human, they were not above feeling selfish satisfaction in their only child's contentment to be a homebody. They realized, of course, that sooner or later she would take a husband—spinsterhood was unthinkable in her case—and they would lose her as their very own. Small wonder that they had no wish to speed the coming of that day. Indeed, it would have been strange if they had not done everything in their power to foster their daughter's love.

So the joyous years sped by—my mother seemingly as permanent a factor in the home life at Mynydd Ednyfed as her parents. And then Maggie Owen met David Lloyd George!

How and where they first met I never knew. I do know it was not a case of love at first sight—so far as my mother was concerned at any rate. Such a thing, on the face of it, would have been unthinkable. That he was tremendously drawn to the lovely lass was understandable. There was no gainsaying her attractiveness now that she was in her twenties. But superficially the young man differed not at all from dozens of others whom my mother numbered among her acquaintances. This absence of distinguishing qualities was, however, only superficial. Beneath a run-of-the-mill appearance lurked an unsuspected, indomitable force of character which would enable him to triumph over any odds. And the odds against him in this case were big enough to daunt a far more eligible suitor than this young solicitor.

Once my grandparents became aware of what was in the wind

they wasted no time in gathering all the available information that could be learned about young George. The facts thus obtained made him obviously an unsuitable son-in-law.

The more they investigated, the more undesirable young George appeared to be. As a two-year-old infant he had been brought from Pembrokeshire to Llanystumdwy, a little hamlet about two miles from Criccieth. The fact that Richard Lloyd, his uncle, foster-father and mentor, was a cobbler and, as such, occupied a less exalted place in the social life of Caernarvonshire than gentlefolk of the Owens' standing mattered not at all. It was not the cobbler's lowly estate that put his ward beyond the pale; it was the fact that he was (a) a Baptist and (b) a Liberal with Radical tendencies. Only a Welsh Presbyterian knows how benighted all Baptists are, just as only a non-Radical Liberal—in the days of Gladstone—knew the depths of infamy inherent in all Radicals.

Do I hear someone ask at this point what can lead otherwise sensible people to judge a man by his uncle's brand of sectarianism, his political leanings? A fair enough question, I agree, in these twentieth-century days, but at the time of which I write, the matter of family, church and politics weighed heavily in the balance for or against any aspiring suitor. And for this seeming irrelevance there was abundant reason. For in most cases—in the Wales of that period—like father like son was something more than a saying. Certainly in the case of Richard Lloyd and David Lloyd George it was literally true. For the youth was an ardent Baptist and a political firebrand. (Many years later I was to learn for myself what a really great character my great-uncle was. After his ward arrived at man's estate and had finally ceased to be under the iron discipline of his guardian, the old man took it out on me! All the things he had done to my father as a young boy he now did to me. And if he frightened my father as thoroughly as he did me, I am not surprised his influence was held to be of importance in appraising his nephew's character.)

When my father showed any reluctance to obey a direct command, my uncle would just look at him; that was generally enough, because he had the most flashing, penetrating eyes, as I know. Should this fail, and that was very rare, out came: "*Mi gwalteisia'i di!*" My father never knew what it meant—but it sufficed, and he was off like a streak of lightning. Many, many years after we discussed this and decided it was derived

from the process undergone by the part of a hand-made shoe called the *gwaltes*, the leather of which had to be pounded into shape and submission by violent application of a piece of hardwood. But the phrase and the look were enough!

In a word, then, my grandparents were definitely opposed to their daughter's having anything to do with the Llanystumdwy cobbler's ward. And, as I hope I have made quite clear, my mother was as obedient a child as she was loving. To hurt her father and mother by any witting action would have caused her equal pain. The chances are, then, that she might have given young George his congé almost at the beginning of his attempted courtship, had it not been for her aunt.

But who will say my father, even at that early stage of his career, was not full of resource, ingenuity and cleverness? For it is indisputable that for weeks before he formally proposed marriage to my mother he paid repeated visits to her aunt. Gradually, and by dint of assiduous endeavour, he succeeded in convincing that lady (old enough to be his mother) that he had all the qualifications of a good husband. Indeed, I have heard it said my great-aunt was fascinated by his charms and personal magnetism to such an extent as to make her his enthusiastic champion. I had my mother's word for it that it was her aunt who stiffened her backbone and helped her to follow the dictates of her heart in the face of her parents' violent opposition. In effect, the elder woman told her that even more important than family, church or politics was the happiness that only great love brings. All my mother need ask herself, this wise counsellor added, was whether she truly loved her suitor. If she could be sure of this she need have no fear of running counter to her parents' wishes. For when they discovered, as they surely would, how right she was and how wrong they'd been, there would be forgiveness and reconciliation and they all would live happily ever after!

This is where Margiad came in.

It must be borne in mind that in those far-off days the telephone had yet to put in an appearance in Wales. Cinemas were undreamed of. The possibilities of young folk being able to communicate or see one another clandestinely were nil. But difficulties—even impossibilities—were made to be circumvented in David Lloyd George's philosophy. With no less expenditure

of personal charm, and with equal success, he set about the task of winning over the Owens' servant to his side. Until he had thus gained an ally in the enemy's camp his sole means of addressing himself to the girl of his heart was a hole-in-the-wall correspondence, a literal cranny in a literal wall that fenced in one of the Owens' pastures. To this secret, makeshift post-office he would bring his love-letter—the missive to be retrieved by my mother and answered in kind. But, for whatever reason, the system did not satisfy young George. It was easier and surer to make Margiad a go-between. And for many months it was this servant who carried the written messages between the lovers.

My grandparents, like equally ill-informed people at this present time, had their facts all wrong as regards the real story of my father's early years. (Although I have it on good authority that the Lloyd George bibliography is probably the most extensive of that of any living man, the fact remains I have yet to read one biography that does David Lloyd George justice. Certainly all of them that have come under my eye are either full of inaccuracies or sadly lacking in important facts—or both.) Inasmuch as I had the real, full story from my mother, I know it is not only true, but its retelling here is justifiable, since it sheds light on the reasons underlying her growing certainty that he was the one man in the world for her.

To begin with, and applicable to the unfair distortion of all the other facts, it was wickedly cruel to dismiss the matter of his father's death by stressing the fact that the infant son thus became a fatherless waif. Actually, William George was a highly cultured, well-read and eminently capable schoolmaster with a good post in a Manchester school. His wife, Elizabeth, had already borne him a daughter before the advent of David. A third child (my uncle William George, who is still alive in Criccieth) was on its way when the schoolmaster's health broke down and he had to relinquish his position. Firm in the belief that the salubrious air of his native South Wales would restore him to robust health, my father's father pulled up stakes and took his family and their earthly possessions to a farm in Pembrokeshire which he had bought. Unhappily he knew next to nothing about farming. This, coupled with the fact that the move brought no amelioration of his condition, made those first few months of unaccustomed farm life an anxious period for his wife. When, with agonizing swift-

ness, the fatal malady got the upper hand and put a full stop to all his cares and pain, the expectant mother found herself in dire straits.

Not only did she know nothing about farming, lack of money would have made it impossible for her to carry on in any event. The future loomed black and ugly for the young widow, burdened by two babies, with a third on the way. In her extremity she turned to her brother, the cobbler of Llanystumdwy. To him she sent a telegram (there was telegraphic service even then) apprising him of what had happened.

Now this great-uncle of mine is also not to be written off as "a cobbler." A young bachelor, he actually had a considerable shoe-making business, employing five hands. Some of these travelled through the Caernarvonshire countryside taking orders for the yearly requirements of many farms. So he was, relatively speaking, a prosperous business-man—although he took chief pride in being a master cobbler, more skilful than the best of his employees. It was characteristic of this great-hearted gentleman that he reacted to his sister's message instantly. Leaving the business to the care of his mother, Becca Llwyd (Rebecca Lloyd), a remarkable personality who died in 1868, he set off within the hour on the tremendously long journey—two whole days by rail and stage-coach—to Pembrokeshire. The fact that he had never approved of his sister's marriage (he insisted the schoolmaster was too much of a dreamer for any woman to trust her life to) made no difference now. His sister was in trouble. And there were those children to be provided for!

In his own thorough fashion he made an inventory of the pitifully few farm implements and articles of household goods and then disposed of them at public auction. So he scraped together something of a nest-egg for his sister. This done, he bundled the little family into the stage-coach and brought them to Llanystumdwy. Here my uncle William was born, and here the three children lived and thrived until they were full-grown. The foster-father was as proud of his adopted brood as he was unsparing with the rod when they fell from grace. From everything my mother told me about that odd *ménage* I should say no children ever had a better upbringing.

What a character he was! In those days schooling in North Wales did not exist for children beyond their twelfth year. Work

was the universal prescription for boys *and* girls once they had entered their teens. (My mother's case, sent to a distant boarding school, was an almost unheard of exception.) But Richard Lloyd, childless bachelor, did not hold with this custom. A boy or a girl deserved more than this by way of preparation to battle with the world. His sister's children must have the benefit of something more than an elementary-school education. But here he was up against an impasse. Neither in Llanystumdwy nor in Criccieth were there teachers capable of taking on the job. So the cobbler decided to do it himself!

I may be biased, but I have never read nor heard of anything finer than what my great-uncle now did. With heroic pertinacity, and at the end of a hard day's work at his cobbler's bench, he took on the task of himself learning Latin and Greek and French! In addition he acquired text-books on English Common Law and laboriously mastered their contents. Thus he equipped himself with at least sufficient knowledge to undertake the further schooling of the children. Nor was this the end of his devotion to them.

When, ten years later, both David and William had passed their law examinations and became articled to a firm of solicitors in Portmadoc, Richard Lloyd shut the doors of his shoe-shop for the last time and bade farewell to Llanystumdwy. True, he had amassed enough money to be able to afford to retire, but it was not to live a life of ease that he took a house in Criccieth. It was unquestionably because he wanted "his" boys to remain under his watchful eye—and the new home was two miles nearer Portmadoc, enabling them to go to their work each morning and return at nightfall. (Now and again, when an old customer besought him to save him from the necessity of buying a pair of the new-fangled, machine-made shoes that were then beginning to appear in Criccieth shops, my great-uncle would undertake the job—as a great favour. But his whole life was centred in the careers that he had carved for his two nephews.)

Wherefore, when he discovered that David had turned his eye towards the heiress on the hill—daughter of a Calvinistic Methodist and a lukewarm Liberal—he was as vehemently opposed to the match as were my maternal grandparents! (In not one of the many books that purport to be biographies of my father that I have read is there so much as a suggestion of this truth. In fact,



most of these writers make it appear that my great-uncle was as keenly in favour of the match as his nephew was ardent.) Not for such an unthinkable alliance had he laboured long and earnestly to fit his wards to tread the path to fame and glory. A stop must be put to the affair before puppy love grew into something more serious.

For what then followed I have only the gossip of old-timers. For obvious reasons my mother never mentioned it to me, and I dare say she was not aware of the plot—if, indeed, there were a plot. Similarly, my father has never referred to it in the course of confiding to me. But, according to the gossips, my great-uncle was first to hit on a way of ridding his nephew of such nonsense. In a word, he turned *matchmaker*! Subtly and by devious means he rounded up the prettiest, most attractive girls in the community, restricting his choice to daughters of good Baptists with strong Radical convictions! These he proceeded to throw at my father's head on every possible occasion. He sang their praises with fine impartiality. Any one of them would make David a good wife.

At the same time, still according to the gossips, the most eligible of the young men (of Presbyterian and landed families) were paraded before my mother by her anxious parents. If she must fall in love and leave the parental roof to set up a home of her own, here were young men of substance, any one of whom would make her a good husband.

So, inevitably, Maggie and David became more than ever determined to find their happiness together.

Nothing is more futile, I know, than trying to account for people's choice of mates. "What can he see in her?" "What can she see in him?" How many thousands of million times have those queries been put by uncomprehending onlookers! But with this said, and trying to be quite impersonal, it seems to me my mother had abundant reason for her conviction that the man she loved was destined to confound those who held him in low esteem. That she was convinced of this is proved by material evidence—newspaper cuttings in her private scrap-book. Let us look at one, an excerpt from a local paper boasting a columnist whose contributions were headed *Sparks from the Anvil*:

"I was pensively blowing my bellows last Saturday afternoon

when my meditations were interrupted by loud and continued sounds of laughter: 'Oh, ho, ho, ho, ho! Ah, ha, ha, ha, ha!' Turning round to look for the cause of this unusual merriment, I saw Wil Potia coming into the smithy, his face streaming with tears, and his body twisted into all kinds of contortions. Without the least ceremony Wil threw himself on the bench which I reserve for distinguished visitors and, pressing his hands against his sides, burst out into another reverberating peal of laughter, with frequent protestations that he should die unless I sent for the doctor. At last I told him seriously that the house was too small for the performance, a large crowd having by this time gathered in front of the door, and by degrees Wil came back to his sober senses again.

'Oh, Joe, forgive me, old boy, but I've never seen the likes of that in all my born days. The magistrates all ran away and left the prisoners in possession of the court, just think of that,' and, tickled by his own joke, Wil started off again on another series of Ha, ha, ha, but I pulled him up short, and asked him what it was all about.

'Well, I'll tell you,' said he. 'Four fellows from Nantlle was hauled up before the beaks today for netting salmon in the lake, and Charley Jones, the solicitor, was prosecutin' them, and that young Lloyd George was defendin'. Oh, ain't he a snapper though!'

'Never mind,' I said. 'What happened?'

'Well, d'ye see, he couldn't deny but the men had nobbled the fish, but, says he, "They had a right to do it because they had done it before their grandfathers was born."'

'How could that be, Wil?' I asked. 'They were not in the land of the living then.'

'Oh, you don't understand, Joe. It's a legal argument, don't you see?'

'All right, Wil, you know more about it than I do. You've been up yourself pretty often.'

'Now then, Joe, if anybody made that remark besides you I should feel insulted. Lloyd George said as how those fellows, the Board of Conservators, has nothing to do with lakes, as they was only appointed to watch over rivers. But Mr. Wynn Griffith says that was all bosh, or something of that kind, and he asks Lloyd George, "D'ye know what a lake is? A lake is

a river," says he. But Lloyd George says the river Llyfni is one thing, and Nantlle lake is another thing, and he bangs away at Charley Jones, and says the court has no jurisdiction to try the case.

'Then the magistrates had a long confab together, and in the end they decided that a lake was a river and that the Board of Conservators had a right to look after Nantlle lake.

"All right," says Lloyd George. "I'm going to appeal, and I'll show you that you are wrong."

'Then Mr. Wynn Griffith boils up and says, "We've decided that point, Mr. George, and you can go to another court."

'Then, Joe, you should have seen Lloyd George. He is the boy to tackle the Tories. Says he, "Yes, sir, and we'll go to a court where we'll get fair play."

'Then Mr. Wynn Griffith flares up awful. My eye, you should have seen him. He's often fired at me for poaching, but nothing like that.

'Says he, "Who isn't giving you fair play? Just name the man, will you?"

'Then Lloyd George quietly looks at him and snaps, "You, sir, most particular."

At this point of his narrative friend Wil stopped—either for want of breath or to watch the effect on me. I confess I was lost in amazement, and asked Wil whether it was not one of his jokes.

'Not a bit, Joe, it's Gospel truth, and there's a lot more of it. Mr. Wynn Griffith gets up in a flaming rage and walks out.'

'What did the other magistrates do, Wil?'

'Oh, there was that knowing old cove, he's a Scotchman, you know, he and two or three more wanted Lloyd George to apologize, but it was no use. Then came the best bit of fun I ever saw since I'm born. There was another chap there as was firing remarks at Lloyd George all the blessed time. After Mr. Wynn Griffith goes out this one begins to swell terrible, and gets up his dander, and says he:

"After that remark I cannot sit heah any longah. It is really too vulgah."

'So off he goes, marching out in that grand sort of way, what you call . . .'

'Majestic,' I suggested.

'Right,' said Wil, 'that is the word. Mr. Wynn Griffith was awful to look at, but the other chap put him clean in the shade.'

'You mean,' I remarked, 'that the imitation was more striking than the reality.'

'Right you are again, Joe, it was worth five bob any day to see. After that the other magistrates cleared out, and when I saw the bench quite empty, something within me said, "Wil, my boy, you are avenged." Then I hollered out, "Three cheers for Lloyd George," but before I took another breath a Bobby dropped on me and chucked me out. Now I'm off to drink up a bumper to Lloyd George.'

So friend Wil departed, and presently I heard the well-known refrain 'For he's a jolly good fellow' echoing through the village."

The shorthand minutes of this case, heard in the Caernarvon Police Court before six magistrates, vary slightly from "friend Wil's" account. The pertinent extracts are as follows:

*"Mr. George.* I again submit that you have not the slightest title of right to try this case, as you have no jurisdiction in the matter.

*The Chairman.* That question will be decided in a superior court.

*Mr. George.* Yes, sir: and a perfectly just and unbiased court, too.

*The Chairman.* If that remark of Mr. George's is meant as a reflection upon any magistrate sitting on this bench I hope that he will name him. A more insulting and ungentlemanly remark to the bench I never heard during the course of my experiences as a magistrate.

*Mr. George* (warmly). But a more true remark was never made in a court of justice.

*The Chairman* (sternly). Tell me to whom you are referring. I must insist upon you to refer to any magistrate or magistrates sitting in this court.

*Mr. George.* Then I refer to you, sir, in particular. (Sensation.)"

I quote this at such length not only as an example of extraordinary moral courage on the part of a young beginner in the

practice of law, but as proof of my mother's keen appreciation of this tyro's daring. None better than she realized how much the youthful "Mr. George" stood to lose by his defiance of those Caernarvon magistrates. For his unprecedented audacity none admired him more than she.

What she never could have guessed was that a day was to come when she herself would be presiding as the chairman of a police court—and that at a later day her last-born child (my sister Megan) would also be a J.P.!



RICHARD LLOYD

Uncle of the Rt Hon. David Lloyd George, O.M., M.P.



## CHAPTER VI

*Tair ffynnon gwybodaeth:  
crebyll, gstyriaeth.  
a dysgeidiaeth.*

Lore from three fountains fills  
her urn: thought, fancy, and  
the power to learn.

YOUTH in Wales during Victoria's reign had no such age limitations as prevail today. There existed none of the influences (the cinema, radio, and a Press that flaunts Government-sponsored advertisements warning all and sundry of the dangers of venereal diseases) which make today's children as worldly-wise and hard-boiled as only old men cynics used to be. So the fact that my mother had lived to be twenty-two years old before the one great romance of her life took root in her heart must not be taken to mean she had passed through the disillusionizing period which the modern Miss has undergone (probably) in her middle teens. Not only in the case of my mother, all adolescents in the Wales of the 'eighties were as unsophisticated as the young children of today. But I wonder if this lack of sophistication is to be deplored. I wonder if, perhaps, the boot is not on the other leg. The clear-eyed unquestioning faith that was my mother's would not readily be found in the unmarried woman of today approaching her middle twenties. Indeed, that simple belief in the omnipotence of good was the foundation-stone of my mother's faith, and neither circumstance nor age modified it.

Of worth-while learning she had acquired a rich store. A more active brain never functioned in a female cranium. Always logical, she was at the same time able to indulge in whimsy and flights of imagination that almost always had comicality as their chief ingredient. So, for all her intellectuality, there was nothing of the pedant about her. Also, her eagerness to add to her stock of knowledge, evidenced by her appetite for good reading matter, never led her into the error of becoming over-serious. Until the day of her death I am sure there was hardly one during which she did not laugh heartily—and make those about her laugh as well. Indeed, the night before she passed away, she was facetious!

It is obviously futile to speculate about what might have happened to my father had my mother not braved her family's opposition and become his wife. The fact that there are old-



timers of Eifion who solemnly declare that it was Maggie Owen who made Lloyd George Prime Minister of England does not make theorizing about it any less ridiculous. But of one thing I am sure. To the mystic dreamer (that trait inherited from his schoolmaster father) who is my father, was added the intense practicality which was my mother's birthright. Between them, it has always seemed to me, there were combined all the qualities that make for greatness. But, rather than my unsupported opinion, let us a second time take a look at my mother's scrap-book. Here we find yet another (and much more detailed) recital of my father's background:

"Seven of the cities of Greece contested for the honour of being the birthplace of Homer. Lloyd George is of Pembroke-shire extraction; though born in Manchester, he has hailed from Fishguard; he is one of the Georges of Trecoed. To understand this it must be known that his father, William George, was the son of a farmer of Trecoed whose grandfather was William George of Tresynwen farm, a landowner and for forty years a deacon of the Baptist Church.

William George, the grandson, was of delicate health and of a studious disposition. When a student at grammar school at Haverfordwest the lady where he lodged made a complaint against him, that he would burn a whole wax candle in a night, bothering his head with books continually; and when on one morning he was heard reading *Paradise Lost* the pious old lady protested that he would never go to heaven because he was reading so much of hell!

After years of training at Haverfordwest he entered a seminary in London where he remained for eight years, for a part of which time he occupied the position of assistant tutor in the Metropolis of the world. Leaving London, he had the charge of a large school in Liverpool under a committee of influential gentlemen. Declining health occasioned his leaving Liverpool and coming home for about a year till his strength was recruited. About 1851 he established a private grammar school at Haverfordwest. Here again his health failed and he removed to North Wales, where he made the acquaintance of Miss Lloyd, a native of Criccieth. They were married in 1860.

Following the birth of a daughter, he accepted charge of a

large school in Manchester, where he set up housekeeping. During the few years he was there David Lloyd George was born. The father's constitution again gave way and he returned to Pembrokeshire and took a small farm called Bwlford, near Haverfordwest, where he spent the remainder of his illustrious life in the quiet repose of a small dairy farm. A promising career was, however, intercepted by death on June 7, 1864, when he was only forty-four years of age.

His tombstone is in Jordanston graveyard, within three miles of Fishguard. But he has left a better monument than the stone; he left behind a son, then but a babe in arms, in the person of David Lloyd George."

I wonder how that newspaper cutting came into my mother's possession! Is it possible she came across it herself? It seems to me unlikely, if only because the Pembrokeshire paper in which it appeared would have had no circulation in Caernarvonshire. Did the youthful suitor give it to her? I am inclined to think he must have done. I have never tried to translate the surmise into certainty. It is one of those things one doesn't ask one's father! How it came to occupy a page to itself in my mother's scrap-book seems less important to me than the fact of its being there. It is as though my mother was bent on gathering every eulogistic tribute to the man she loved she could lay her hands on—the better to justify her choice of husband. This undoubtedly accounts for the presence in the scrap-book of another cutting which reads in part as follows:

"... Born in Manchester in 1863, he was educated at the National School in Llanystumdwy. Thereafter he was articled to Messrs. Breese, Jones and Casson, solicitors of Portmadoc. In 1884 he passed his final examination with honours and then, with a younger brother, set up for himself in Criccieth, where he is said to have established the best solicitor's business in that part of Wales."

For here we can read between the lines and find not only an additional reason for her being proud of her fiancé, but also proof of his ability to support a wife.

There were other reasons to make her sure of herself, things that never found their way into print. There was, for

instance, the fact that almost ten years before she met him David Lloyd George had begun his career as a preacher. (In the Non-conformist sects of Wales anyone who chooses can preach the Gospel; it is not the exclusive prerogative of the ordained clergy.) And, as was to have been expected, the lad of fifteen had imbibed deeply of religion under his uncle's tutelage, and even at that tender age could quote the Scriptures with all the fervour of a more experienced Evangelist. Of course, there was no gainsaying the lamentable fact that he was a Baptist, but even for that my mother could find justification. For him to have been anything else would have made him guilty of rank disloyalty to the cobbler uncle to whom he owed so much. With her logical mind she could see clearly that she was a Presbyterian chiefly because it was the sect to which her parents swore allegiance. In a word, sectarianism was an accident of birth and family loyalty.

So the halcyon days of secret, fleeting meetings, together with the surreptitious exchange of love-letters, made life for the heiress of Mynydd Ednyfed gloriously happy. There were rifts in the lute, of course. Complete continuous concord—where two such dynamically positive personalities as my mother and father are concerned—was impossible. Quite as I can see in my mind's eye my mother's full approval of the young lawyer's telling off the chairman of the Caernarvon magistrates, her bursting pride that he should have been so daring at the very outset of his career, I can also picture her querying the wisdom of another instance of his early-expressed defiance of cautious, correct behaviour as a solicitor.

Rather than reproduce any of the several newspaper cuttings dealing with what was obviously a *cause célèbre* which fill pages of my mother's scrap-book and run to thousands of words, it will be enough, I think, to epitomize the case. It dated back to 1864 when a Mrs. Owen (not a relation of my mother's family), a land-owner, gave a piece of land to the Rector of Llanfrothen as an addition to the parish burial ground which was found to be too small. There was no written record made of the gift, but in the ensuing five years enough money was collected to tear down the old wall of the churchyard and to build a new wall to include the additional piece of ground. Burials began to take place in the addition in 1872 although it had never been consecrated.

Now, in 1880 the Burials Act was passed, authorizing burials to

take place with services other than those of the Church of England. The rector objected strongly and persuaded Mrs. Owen that since the gift had been verbal she still had a legal right to deal with this piece of land. Then he induced her to execute a deed by which she granted the land in trust to permit burials of parishioners upon condition that the service of the Church of England only was used.

Seven years later a Mr. Roberts died. His daughter had been buried in the new part of the burial ground, and his executors gave notice that they wished to have the father interred beside the daughter—with a Nonconformist service under the Act. But the rector refused permission, declaring that under the deed of gift no one could be buried there unless the Church of England service was used. To prevent the dead man's friends from carrying out their announced intention to hold the burial in the graveyard in spite of the rector, the latter padlocked the iron gates. So the funeral cortège found its way effectually barred.

At this point one of the mourners thought of the audacious young lawyer of Criccieth, and a deputation of the dead man's friends called upon my father. When he had all the facts before him he tendered his advice in characteristically forthright fashion.

"Go back," he said, "and tear down those gates. Bury your friend beside his daughter, and use whatever service you please."

And this, in fact, is what they then proceeded to do!

Of course, the rector brought an action for trespass. Although the jury found that Mrs. Owen, having parted with the land more than twelve years before 1881, had under the Statute of Limitations no title to the ground, and no right then to make the altered deed of gift, the county court judge refused to accept the verdict and found the defendants guilty.

On appeal to the Queen's Bench Division of the High Court of Justice in London their Lordships gave judgment reversing the decision of the county court judge, and allowed the appeal with costs.

Maggie Owen could chalk up another triumph for the man she loved, but I have an idea she must have read him a lesson about the wickedness of sanctioning the gatecrashing of a graveyard!

This seems to me an appropriate place to try to dispel an illusion about my mother which, on visits to Criccieth in the years since her death, I find is growing more and more widespread. Origin-

ally spread abroad by the many beneficiaries of her kindness, the legend that she was a saint finds an ever-increasing number of credulous believers. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Herself deeply religious and teetotal, she did not demand in others equal devotion to the Church or equal abhorrence of strong drink. She numbered among her friends sinners and publicans quite as, I believe, the Founder of Christianity did. Even I suffered no diminution of her all-forgiving love—no matter how far I strayed from the straight and narrow path. And when my father was denouncing most vehemently “the Trade”—which is to say the makers and dispensers of alcoholic beverages—my mother and he were not so lacking in hospitality and so bigoted in their views as not to have always on hand an abundant supply of wines and liquors.

Also my mother was capable of hating—fiercely. And that surely is not saintlike. Of all the things that aroused full-blooded, outspoken loathing in her, nothing seemed to her more despicable than hypocrisy. And, oh, how she could spot a hypocrite! For “Sunday Christians” she had utter contempt. She held lower than the lowest the regular three-times-a-Sunday churchgoer—when he spent the other six days of the week abstracting pennies from his master’s till! In a word, she drew a sharp line between the truly religious and the sanctimonious pretender. At her hands the latter breed got short shrift.

I can therefore see her being swung around to my father’s point of view in the graveyard burials case. For, as was later conclusively proved, the real reason behind the passing of the Act was the sordid determination of the (then) Established Church not to be done out of the money revenue attaching to interment in consecrated (!) ground. Even in those far-off days my mother was not at all overawed by rank and title. From lay preacher and archbishop alike she demanded cleanliness of motive. Indeed, as she saw it, the greater the hypocrite’s position the greater was his sin.

So I read into the cuttings dealing with this case her eventual approval of my father’s part in it. She was never one to harbour a grievance. She would not have made this permanent record of an incident which had lessened her admiration of the man she loved.

At any rate, during the period of the clandestine courtship there

was no hint of the shape of things to come. Gradually throughout Caernarvonshire the name of the energetic, youthful David Lloyd George was beginning to carry weight. But it was as an astute, resourceful, audacious lawyer that he was making a reputation—not at all as an embryonic politician. With his younger brother, William, he was bent on proving in actual fact that the local newspapers did not exaggerate in saying that theirs was the most flourishing law practice in North Wales. To battle in the courts—for the under-dog and against the entrenched moneyed interests—was an undertaking big enough to occupy all his time and thought. If his ambition had a wider horizon I am certain it was geographical only. He may have had his eye fixed on chambers in the Inns of Court in distant London, but if and when he should make the move it would be as a solicitor. As for my mother, I am equally sure she was more than content to see him win ever-increasing fame among his own people. She had no patience with the glib saying anent the prophet being without honour in his own land. To her mind it was a flimsy excuse for the rolling stone, on all fours with those who insist the best berries are to be found in fields beyond!

True, the young lawyer had long since thrown in his lot with the Liberationists. Nationalism for Wales, an end to the schism between North and South, filled him with a fervent passion. Not only as an outdoor preacher, on debating platforms he had been an ardent champion of the Young Wales movement. And in the inner councils of the North Wales Liberal Party his name was coming to mean something more than either he or his sweetheart could have dreamed.

So we come to the Christmastide of 1887. By this time, as far as I can make out, the determination of the two young people to defy their parental and avuncular objections respectively made their marriage only a question of time. Between Mynydd Ednyfed Fawr and the little house in Criccieth existed, in place of the former open hostility, a state of mutual resignation to a lamentable inevitability. The absence of enthusiastic approval of the forthcoming nuptials, to express it euphemistically, no doubt had a bearing on the young couple's decision to do without a "posh" wedding. Their decision was too well known throughout the countryside for them to attempt to marry secretly. And the idea of an elopement, with its implied cowardice, would never have

found favour with either of them. But privacy and a complete absence of any festive celebration were their choice. Moreover, neither Criccieth nor Llanystumdwy appealed to them as a fitting place in which to solemnize the union.

Naturally, in view of their upbringing and their own feelings, it had to be a chapel wedding. But *which* chapel? And where? It was this momentous question, indeed, that made Criccieth impossible as the scene of the ceremony. For ever since her young days my mother had been a regular attendant at Seion Chapel, where her father was senior deacon, and in the adjoining road, a few hundred yards distant, was the Baptist chapel to which Richard Lloyd took his niece and two nephews three times each Sunday. It was too much to ask of either Maggie or David—to desert the one in favour of the other. So they compromised on the little chapel at Pencaenewydd, a Presbyterian chapel—the bridegroom's generous concession to his bride. But she was not to have it all her own way. Actually the ceremony was a jointly conducted affair, the Reverend John Owen, M.A., the Presbyterian minister of Seion, and Richard Lloyd, my great-uncle and a Baptist, officiating.

Early on the wedding day the word was passed around that the long-awaited event was to take place in Pencaenewydd. As if by magic, Criccieth was suddenly festooned with flags and bunting. The whole town made holiday, the celebrations continuing far into the night. Through unshaded windows for miles about, the cheery beams of lamplight brightened the wintry night. Criccieth had been passed by in favour of Pencaenewydd, true, but everyone had the grace to understand—and the absence of the principal actors was not going to be allowed to dampen the celebrations. Here, surely, was striking evidence of the community's love of the bride, of the great admiration in which the bridegroom was held. Meantime the newly wedded couple were driving through the mountains of Caernarvonshire *en route* to Bangor to catch the train to London, where the honeymoon was spent.

On their return to Criccieth they made their home in the old farmhouse that had been my mother's birthplace. And here they stayed for several years. Here, the year following their marriage, I was born—in the room in which my mother was born. As this is *one* date I am fairly certain of, it had better go on record—

February 15, 1889; my mother always used to tell me she could hear the farm hands tramping in to their midday meal simultaneously with the event. With my arrival a new problem had to be solved. It had been possible—if unprecedented—for the wedding service to be conducted by a Presbyterian pastor and a Baptist layman, but baptism in two different creeds just couldn't be done!

How the decision was finally reached I never knew. Perhaps in view of my father's having consented to be married in a Presbyterian chapel, my mother graciously yielded to his wishes regarding my baptism. In any event, I was never christened, but was duly baptized at seventeen in my father's chapel, and became what I have remained throughout my life—a Baptist. Subsequently each new arrival was alternately christened or baptized a Presbyterian or a Baptist, so that when there were four of us our denominational allegiance was on a fifty-fifty basis. The untimely death of my eldest sister upset the balance until the coming of the baby of the family, Megan, whose christening in the Presbyterian faith balanced the scales once more.

But I am getting ahead of my story. To come back to the newly-weds, there is no question about the change of attitude towards their son-in-law which intimate acquaintance worked in the case of my grandparents. If the naturally cautious *laissez-faire* tenant farmer still thought the young solicitor was far too radical in his political theories, he at least came to a realization of the sincerity of this champion of the under-dog. And with that realization came ungrudging admiration for him as a man. At any rate, their only child was supremely happy, and that was quite enough for her mother, as well as for her father.

Their reflected happiness now expressed itself in a surprising and substantial fashion. In a way it is a sad story, but intermingled in the long chain of events connected with it were many days and weeks that are still joyous memories for me. Oddly enough, it began with history repeating itself. Just as old Richard Lloyd decided to give up his shoe-shop and move to Crickieth in order to keep his two nephews under his watchful eye while they were articled to the Portmadoc firm of solicitors, so now Richard Owen made a similar decision—for a similar reason!

By this time he undoubtedly knew his wife would never bear him another child, and both of them loved children. My arrival



on the scene they took to be merely the forerunner of many more to come, and the prospect of having a houseful of grandchildren to fuss over and spoil appealed mightily to them. But by the same token this rosy prospect required for its full enjoyment more suitable quarters than the century-old farmhouse on the hilltop. So my grandfather decided to drop the curtain on his lifelong career as a farmer and to spend his remaining days in retirement.

So down from the hill he came, and in due course saw the completion of two big houses, standing side by side on an eminence overlooking Portmadoc road and the bay beyond. One of these was to be his wife's and his new home, the other was for the younger couple. The picture in my grandparents' mind was a joyous one—in which their well-loved daughter and her babies were the all-important factors. They fondly believed they would see the newcomers grow to maturity—running back and forth from house to house, each as much their home as the other. And certainly no young husband and father ever had (in North Wales at least) a more secure and well-found abode for himself and his family than this commodious, perfectly appointed mansion that had been built expressly for them.

## CHAPTER VII

*Prif ragoriaeth merch  
yw gwarineb, a mwyrnder,  
a serch.*

Of womanhood the virtues three  
Are: in her wishes kind to be;  
Of manners gentle and sedate;  
In loving, only, passionate.

AMBITION in its generally accepted sense did not burn fiercely in my mother's breast. If there are those who think the rôle destiny called upon her to play can aptly be likened to that of a Lady Beaconsfield with her Disraeli I disagree with them. The status of the young man who wooed and won her was that of a fearless, brilliant lawyer. For him to have carried on to the end, his practice confined to the courts of Caernarvonshire, would have been quite all that was necessary to her happiness. So far as she was concerned, world acclaim meant less than the good opinion of her own folk. In this connection, as in everything, it was her great love of Wales that made renown in foreign lands of small moment. So, unquestionably, if she had had the ordering of their lives, Criccieth would have remained their home, North Wales the field of her husband's professional activities. As for my father, Caernarvonshire must have seemed to offer ample scope for his newly established law business—and he, too, was ardently a lover of Wales.

But at this point, a little more than two years after their marriage, sudden death struck down the Member of Parliament for the Caernarvon Boroughs—an event as unexpected as it was seemingly unrelated to the career of David Lloyd George, Criccieth solicitor.

Edmund Swetenham, Q.C., had been in Parliament for the Caernarvon Boroughs for almost four years when he was laid low at his home in Wrexham by an attack of influenza. After an illness of several weeks the sixty-nine-year-old M.P. had apparently recovered, and on March 19, 1890, he was well enough to make an appearance at the dinner table in his home, Cam-yr-Alyn. Following dinner, he engaged in a game of cards, and then went into an adjoining room to look for a book. Immediately afterwards the bell rang, and when the butler entered he found his master in a state of collapse on a sofa. Heart failure was given as the cause of death.

Now Swetenham had been the unsuccessful Conservative candidate for the Caernarvon Boroughs in 1885, but was returned the following year by a majority of 136 over Jones Parry, Gladstonian Liberal. By his death the constituency, temporarily deprived of a representative in Parliament, was faced with the necessity of holding a by-election to appoint a successor. At first it was believed that the Hon. Frederick Wynn, Lord Newborough's son, would be the Conservative candidate for the seat thus rendered vacant, but eventually the Tories decided to put Ellis Nanney forward to battle the Liberals at the polls. In the considered opinion of Liberals, as well as Conservatives, this popular and kindly disposed man of wealth, in spite of his being a landlord, was the strongest candidate it was possible for the Conservatives of the Caernarvon Boroughs to bring forward. According to these same political wiseacres, Lloyd George was in many respects the weakest candidate the Liberals could have named. As one of the local Liberal newspapers of the day put it:

"We may be asked who is Mr. Lloyd George that he should sit in Parliament for the Caernarvon Boroughs. The sufficient answer is that he is the antithesis of Mr. Ellis Nanney."

In a word, the voters were expected to vote *against* the Tory candidate rather than *for* the young, untried Radical.

Because I was their only child when these events took place (although I was an infant) I feel justified in making brief reference to this momentous first step in my father's political career. As my brother and sisters came along, London seemed to be their parents' established habitat, the House of Commons their father's permanent place of business. Only I knew better than this. Only I was of an age to understand the heartaches involved in exchanging the loveliness of Snowdonia for the unfriendly coldness of the Metropolis. In this respect, at least, I think it is true to say I was taken more closely into my mother's confidence than any of the other children were. Better than they I can appreciate the true meaning of the very few newspaper cuttings (dealing with that first political campaign) which my mother saw fit to preserve in her scrap-book. Like everything else in that private record, these are there because they were of great significance to her.

There is one, for instance, that must have roused my mother

to righteous indignation, impelling her even to confront her father with angry denunciation of the methods adopted by the smugly respectable Tories. The cutting tells of a Conservative Party meeting at Conway at which more than once hearty cheers greeted mention of Lloyd George's name. In spite of the chairman's attempts to keep the meeting in order, these cheers for the opposition candidate were followed by a large part of the crowd bursting into song, their choice being *Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau*, a rebel ditty tantamount to the consigning of all Tories to the nether regions. Whereupon the rally broke up in disorder. Now the North Wales *Observer and Express*, containing an account of the near-riot, never appeared in Conway, where it had a large circulation. The Conservatives, fearful of the effect of such a report on the electors, had taken the precaution to buy up every copy of the paper before it reached Conway.

Another cutting, which I am sure my mother used as an especially vicious piece of Tory dirty work, gives an utterly untrue description of Richard Lloyd's activities as an educator. According to this newspaper my father had boasted that his cobbler uncle had run a night school for the benefit of "adult colliers and seamen." It quoted my father as adding that "half the sea captains of the neighbourhood owed their promotion to his coaching." Having thus misquoted my father, the leading article ends with the assertion that there is not a collier within a hundred miles of Llanystumdwy, and no sailorman had his home there. Deliberately to put lies in my father's mouth—only to discredit him—must have made my mother see red. Knaves of that stripe were all the more to be excoriated because of their distortion of an especially noble act. She always considered Richard Lloyd's educating himself in order to be able to educate his two fatherless nephews one of the finest examples of selflessness ever to come to her notice.

For whatever reason, there are no cuttings dealing with the many charges of bribery, corruption and intimidation which filled the Liberal Press of North Wales in this period. Perhaps she held them beneath contempt. More probably, these were not personal attacks on her husband, and therefore did not concern her personally. It is quite possible she knew at first hand how pressure could be brought to bear on a wavering voter by the use of intimidatory tactics—without the procedure meriting denunciation.

After all, if a candidate avows his intention to smash the landlord class it is hardly to be expected that his would-be victims will take the threat lying down. If her own father, a tenant farmer, received an intimation that his relations with his landlord might be less happy if the Liberal Party firebrand were to win, the landlord's motive was at least understandable. The method obviously seemed less reprehensible to her than those others.

I have only one fact on which to base my opinion (for what that is worth) that my mother was not eager to see her husband triumph in that first election. The fact is her remaining at home throughout the campaign. Whereas in later years, when his re-election had come to be a habit, she was invariably at his side at public meetings, she let him tour Caernarvonshire alone in his maiden attempt to convince the voters that he was the man to represent them in the Commons. In holding this opinion I am not unmindful of a further fact which may have been, and probably was, a contributing cause for her staying at home—my advent. Cavorting about Caernarvonshire in those days of primitive transport was hardly the thing for the mother of a young infant!

So on election day she was not with him at Caernarvon, where he had gone to be present at the counting of the votes. But into the County Seat flocked thousands of others, Tories and Liberals jostling one another in an ever-growing throng that filled Castle Square to overflowing. In the circumstances it was as well for her that she was not there. For on the stroke of noon it was announced that Nanney had been elected! Money and power had been too much for the young firebrand, it seemed. Supporters of the landed classes had triumphed. The Square echoed with their cheering, the dejected silence of the Liberals in sharp contrast to the joyful abandon of the victors.

Then from the steps of the Town Hall came a second—amazing—announcement. An error had been made! There had been a recount of the votes. A packet of twenty marked for the Liberal Party candidate had inadvertently been credited to his opponent. The recount showed that the correct tally gave Lloyd George one thousand nine hundred and sixty-three and Ellis Nanney one thousand nine hundred and forty-five votes. By the narrow margin of eighteen votes my father had won the seat. This was on April 10, 1890.

And here, indicating anew my mother's penchant for picking out the humorous angle in the most serious matters, is a passage in a newspaper cutting in her scrap-book:

“... the figures were announced and a wild uproar immediately ensued. Mr. Nanney, on showing himself outside, was seized upon by his supporters and borne off upon their shoulders towards the Conservative Club, looking as though he did not altogether enjoy his ride in this pick-a-back fashion. It is a sort of thing one may put up with after a victory, but must be rather a trying ordeal for a man smarting under defeat. Mr. Nanney had previously received a triumphal ovation in a carriage drawn by ropes and preceded by torches. It was now Mr. George's turn. He and a carriage full of his supporters were drawn through the streets into the market square, at the top of which he briefly addressed a crowd of four or five thousand persons. Before starting again, fresh ropes were procured and an extensive perambulation of the town was made, the ‘Boy Member,’ as somebody called him, being everywhere received with the utmost enthusiasm.

Coming round at length to the Liberal Club, which had by this time blazed out with flags, the demonstration came to an end by several brief speeches delivered in front of the building. The street below was densely thronged, and tremendous applause broke out again and again as the new member addressed the crowd.”

Naturally my father's one idea now was to get home to my mother as quickly as possible, but only Ellis Nanney caught the afternoon train to Criccieth. An urgent demand from the Liberals in Bangor compelled my father to go there immediately. At Bangor station he was greeted by a tremendous crowd of wild cheering supporters, and again he was hauled through the streets in a carriage drawn by several scores of men. When the celebrating there came to an end my father managed to get away on the evening train to Criccieth.

Of course his own townsfolk were wild with joy. The little township was ablaze with bonfires. From every window of every house lights shone out. At the station almost the entire population jammed together in a cheering mass awaited the return of their conquering hero. On his arrival he was shepherded into the in-

evitable open carriage, drawn by scores of his followers, and so another triumphal procession began. The sound of their jubilant cries brought my mother and her parents to the door of the farmhouse when the procession was still a mile distant, and far below them.

Now the road that leads from the village green to Mynydd Ednyfed Fawr is steep. Even for the lusty enthusiasts, hauling on the ropes attached to the vehicle in which my father was seated, it must have been heavy going. But obviously the only possible end of the victory parade was their hero's own doorstep. And so they slogged along up the hill with the singing torch-bearers ahead and behind.

When they were still a quarter of a mile away my mother issued an order to Sally, my nurse, a very determined and formidable young lady. With satisfaction and alacrity Sally proceeded to obey the command. Down the sweeping road, through the dark, she ran. Not until she reached the closed gates that barred the way up to the house did she halt. Here, arms akimbo and the light of battle in her eyes, she awaited the arrival of the cavalcade. The flickering flares of the torches revealed her to the leaders of the procession when they were within a few feet of her. She must have presented a formidable appearance, for they stopped their singing in the middle of a bar and came to a dead stop.

"What is all this going on?" she demanded, in Welsh of course. And without waiting for an answer, "You're to stop your noise. Do you want to wake the baby?"

So out of the carriage stepped my father, and alone he made his ignominious way through the gate and up to the house while his subdued followers turned about and retraced their steps down the hill!

Actually my mother was prouder than ever of her husband. Indeed, I read into little scraps that she pasted in her book in the days immediately following the election something suspiciously like chortling. There is, for instance, this effusion "with apologies to the shade of Robert Burns":

Now in her "green" mantle Caernarvon's arrayed,

Alas for the Tories who boastingly said,

"This last bye-election is certain, ha! ha!"

By George! They are beaten! and Nanney's awa'.

By George! They are beaten! and Nanney's awa'.

## THE PORTRAIT

Their schemes against Parnell have perished still-born,  
Their mean little tricks have been held up to scorn,  
They have found in the *Times* but a feeble catspaw,  
And here's the result, that their Nanney's awa'.  
And here's the result, that their Nanney's awa'.

Oh where and oh where! in the "fast flowing tide,"  
Shall the Tory and Liberal Unionist hide?  
The humbugs who prate about order and law,  
They had best follow Nanney, and Nanney's awa'.  
They had best follow Nanney, and Nanney's awa'.

Then there is a paragraph headed:

"Something Like In-Nanney-ty."

And another that reads:

"The Contest at Caernarvon was a Nanneymated affair!"

(To keep the record straight, although of course it had no bearing on my mother's concern lest my infant slumber be disturbed, that momentous afternoon and evening were marked not only by the wild welcome accorded him at Caernarvon, Bangor and Criccieth—he had also to make stops at Conway and Pwllheli, where his carriage was man-drawn through the streets to the accompaniment of wild cheering.)

Of course, my mother was fully aware of the basic difference which her husband's election worked in their lives—a change of domicile from her beloved Criccieth to the London which, even during the honeymoon, appealed to her not at all as a home. On the other hand, there was no question in her mind as to her duty. Had business demanded that her husband establish himself at the North Pole she would have accompanied him and done her best to make the igloo home bright and cheery! Indeed, so far as she was concerned, there was little to choose between the North Pole and London! I feel it necessary to emphasize this point because it sheds light on my mother's character to a greater degree than almost anything else could. For thirty years—roughly from 1890 to 1920—she spent the major part of her time keeping house in London. And every hour of that lengthy period found her homesick for her native land. But nothing that she ever said during this enforced exile betrayed her great longing. Her place was by



her husband's side—as a helpmeet, a home-maker. It would never do to let him know how distasteful the ways of London were to her. It would have worried him. Her job—an important part of it—was to make his home life as happy as his day-by-day political manœuvring was a never-ending grim battle.

How magnificently she functioned in the rôle thus forced upon her is history. To this day they talk in Whitehall about the wonderful "breakfasts" that were served in 10 Downing Street when my father occupied that house. But not only while he was Prime Minister, while he was on the threshold of his career as a Parliamentary battler my mother made his home a haven of peace and good cheer to which he could bring his associates in the certain knowledge that whatever the hour or however many his guests there would be an abundance of good things to eat and drink for all.

What I am trying to do here is to efface the last vestige of doubt in the reader's mind as to my mother's selflessness—a doubt that may have been engendered by her ordering Sally to break up that torchlight parade. After all, she was a young mother with an infant, her first-born. She had yet to learn and master the art of politics as it applies to the politician's wife. In point of fact, she was always—in the case of each of the four children who followed me—a devoted mother before all else. For her to have combined such great mother-love with the selfless devotion which she gave her husband has always seemed to me to be epic proof of her having been a great lady.

Obviously she accompanied my father when he went up to London to take his new-won seat in the House. That ceremony must have impressed her very much. I come to this conclusion because the newspaper cuttings describing his induction into Parliament are the last ones which, apparently, my mother found sufficiently interesting to merit inclusion in her scrap-book. As always, her sense of humour led her to preserve both the friendly and the hostile descriptions. Of these, one of the former has this to say:

"It was a striking sight—immediately below the venerable figure of Lord Cottesloe stood the young M.P. for the Caernarvonshire Boroughs, nearly seventy years his junior, pale with excitement and the thoughts of the career opening before him . . .

when at last the young member, with his sensitive face and slight boyish figure, advanced to the table between Mr. Stuart Rendel and Mr. Arthur Acland the cheers were loud and hearty."

In contrast to this, another account of the same ceremony reads in part as follows:

"Mr. Lloyd George is a young man, pale and stooping, and of lounging gait . . . had it not been for the well-known lung power of Dr. Tanner and his friends I am afraid the latest recruit to the ranks of the Separatists would have had a rather chilling reception. The British Empire is not going to be destroyed by a majority of eighteen Welshmen who can think of nothing but the disestablishment of the Church."

As an example of what can be done with the same set of facts, it seems to me this choice of my mother's could not be bettered.

At any rate, their presence in her scrap-book has especial significance. It suggests to me that at the outset of my father's political career my mother had learned a fundamental truth about the game as it is played in Whitehall. As compared with what was to come this induction ceremony could be likened to the firing of a toy pistol in advance of a great pyrotechnics display. Yet it could produce at the same time applause that was "loud and hearty"—and "a rather chilling reception"! Obviously Parliamentary pens were dipped not only in ink—when it suited the writer's purpose the writing fluid used was vitriol!

To understand my mother's attitude at this time, and to account for what my father now did, it must be pointed out that there is no guarantee of permanence for the holder of a seat in the House of Commons. Indeed, it can be truthfully said of that legislative body as a whole that it lives from day to day. Unlike the American Congress, to which men and women are elected for a specified "term" of four years, the life of Parliament may come to an abrupt end at any time. Roughly, the period between general elections works out at something between five and seven years, but such "expectation of life" is on all fours with the actuarial figures of a life insurance company. In my father's case there was every reason to anticipate that he would hold his seat for a very much shorter period before it would become necessary for him to contest it a second time. For he held it by virtue of his

winning a by-election; he was there because of the death of the former incumbent, to fill the vacancy thus created.

In these circumstances it is not surprising that my mother's chief concern in the weeks and months immediately following her husband's victory at the polls had to do with his status as a breadwinner for the family. And that her family, unlike her parents', was to be numerous was with her an *idée fixe*. Even then another baby was on the way.

So it was not only David Lloyd George, M.P., who took up a new life in the Metropolis; prudence dictated his establishing himself as a money-maker. Although then, as now, the legal profession was overcrowded with men of ability old enough to be his father, this twenty-seven-year-old solicitor of Criccieth had no doubt whatever that he would win as great success in the courts of London as he had already won in Caernarvonshire. And his self-confidence was matched by my mother's conviction that he would succeed.

## CHAPTER VIII

*Gwir dros byth  
yn yr unman.*

While all things else shall shift and roam,  
Truth ever truth is, and at home

HOME—in these days of chop and change—is for many unfortunates the place where they hang their hat. For country folk like my parents (and myself for that matter) the very essence of a real home is its changelessness. In my lifetime I have seen whole districts of the old London disappear, ancient landmarks giving way to so-called “improvements” which, in fact, must sadden many Cockney hearts. I can remember, for example, when Park Lane was a thoroughfare of distinction—every house from Marble Arch to Piccadilly a time-mellowed abode of character and dignity. Today Park Lane is a hodge-podge of service flats and luxury hotels, underground garages and motor-car salerooms, small shops and snack bars. And this transformation is by no means an isolated case. The Leicester Square of my youth has vanished. Where once “flesh and blood” entertainment was the enticing fare offered Londoners of another generation—on the spacious stage of the Alhambra or the Empire—huge cinemas have reared their brazen heads. Dear old Daly’s, too, is only a memory, flickering shadows on a screen taking the place of those well-loved artistes who made the long reign of George Edwardes a triumphant succession of musical comedy gems. The nightingale may sing in Berkeley Square—in the lyrics of a popular song—but the skyline of that lovely oasis of yester-year is a jazzed-up medley of hideous, modernistic office buildings and ugly blocks of flats. The order of the times is change!

Curiously, because it was well in advance of this twentieth-century discontent with existing surroundings, my mother was infected with a kind of restlessness that found expression in frequent shifts from one London address to another. It was as if, divorced from the influence of the unchanging hills and sea of her native Snowdonia, she was for ever seeking the unattainable, a place she could make over into a satisfying home from home. I have her own word for it, and therefore know her quest was in vain. Of all the dwelling-places in town and in the adjacent countryside which we occupied for shorter or longer periods

between 1890 and 1920 not one meant more to my mother than a temporary address. For what it is worth, her opinion of No. 11 Downing Street was that it was less undesirable as a dwelling-place than No. 10. But at best this was a case of damning with faint praise.

Inasmuch as my father's election to Parliament offered him an opportunity to extend his law practice, he was not slow to seize it. Taking rooms in Gray's Inn Road, he set up in business in an office in the City as Lloyd George & Co. Obviously, if attendance in the House had been the chief consideration, Westminster would have been the district in which to have lodgings. But that narrow margin of eighteen votes hardly justified complacency so far as his political future was concerned. Even my mother's buoyant optimism could not blind her to the possibility of a change of heart on the part of the Caernarvonshire electorate at the next election. (I wonder what odds they could have got against his being returned a victor at the polls for more than fifty consecutive years?) But if his future as an M.P. was open to question, there was no doubt in his mind (or in my mother's) that he could repeat in London his success as a lawyer in Snowdonia.

Lest I make it appear that my father was lacking in self-confidence (as a vote-getter) or that my mother's faith in his political sagacity was not all it should have been, I make haste to disavow any such intention. They both knew and were proud of the fact that both in Parliament and in their native land the people looked upon my father and his colleague, Tom Ellis, as the national leaders of Wales. And this was no empty phrase. Before this pair of passionate patriots aroused their countrymen to nationalistic enthusiasm you had to go back to the ancient princes of Wales to find their counterparts, to those far-off rebels who fought for nothing short of the independent self-government of Wales, those other princes of the old days, Glyndwr and Y Llyw Olaf and Llewelyn ap Iorwerth and Owen Gwynedd. True, in less remote times there had also been patriots like Thomas Gee, Henry Richard, Dr. Edwards and Charles Y Bala, but although they had been men of great national importance they were the pioneers, the preparers of the ground for the national leadership of Tom Ellis and my father. The trouble was—and no one appreciated this more keenly than my mother—the people found it safer to revel in the memory of the attempted independence of

1400 than to run the risk of another attempt in 1890. She was sure both her husband and Tom Ellis, as national leaders, were a hundred years ahead of their time. In any event, there were already three mouths to feed and that was by no means the end of my father's family responsibilities. All too well my mother knew the undesirability of being an only child. She was determined that I should have brothers and sisters!

From her own lips I had ample proof of my father's ardour as a champion of Wales in those first days of his political career. He used to cite the case of Thomas Davis, the Irish rebel poet. If that great patriot could hope and labour for Ireland against all hope, surely Wales was equally worthy (and no more hopeless) a cause for which to battle. Nor was he wholly inexperienced in the game of politics. Before his twenty-sixth birthday the members of the Caernarvonshire County Council created him an alderman, and long before he fought Ellis Nanney, the Squire of Llanystumdwyl, for the vacant seat at Westminster, he had made a name for himself as "the boy alderman." Actually he had four invitations to stand as a candidate in the elections for the County Council and refused them all. So his victory over the village squire was referred to as one of the fairy-tales of Wales. But London landlords, as a class, are disinclined to believe in fairy-tales, especially on Quarter Day!

It was all very well, I can hear my mother saying, for Merlin, the Arthurian magician, the fatherless boy of the streets of Carmarthen, to dedicate his life to the legendary monarch. He had no wife and family to consider. Also his sole asset was his wizardry. In my father's case, however brilliant his talents as a politician, he had proven ability as a solicitor—and as a solicitor he could provide for his growing family. (Those were the days when M.P.s were unpaid; it was not until many years later that Asquith secured the passage of a bill by which he and his colleagues in the House received a salary—originally four hundred pounds and now six hundred pounds a year.) To that unimaginative landlord, then, the significance of the initials M.P. after his tenant's name meant no more than fairy-tales. Doubtless he would have disclaimed all knowledge of King Arthur, much less Merlin! He would have been cold and unmoved if you had convinced him that Henry Tudor, the Welshman who became Henry VII, named his first-born son Arthur in honour of the

heroic, legendary ruler of the early Britons. So neither as the erstwhile "boy alderman" nor as the present M.P. did my father interest his landlord. All that interested him was prompt payment of the rent for the lodgings in Gray's Inn Road.

Those first days in London must have been most trying for my mother. Of course, I don't for a moment suggest she was ever in want for the necessities of life. My father had saved some money from his earnings as a solicitor in Caernarvonshire, and the practice which he had established there was still bringing in substantial fees, the offices in Criccieth, Portmadoc and Pwllheli operating under the watchful eye of his younger brother, William.

My great-uncle converted himself into a solicitor's managing clerk and took charge of the Criccieth office. Unfortunately for the wine-bibbers of the town, this office was directly opposite a famous old hostelry named Brynhir Arms. Entrance to this resort was painfully difficult if one wished to escape detection by Uncle Lloyd. Many and devious—and all of them laughable—were the methods adopted by thirsty souls to arrive at their haven unobserved from across the road. How long and earnestly mine host of the Brynhir Arms must have prayed that the Criccieth office of Lloyd George & George would be moved! By a curious coincidence Uncle Lloyd's shoe-making shop in Llanystumdwy was squarely opposite a pub known as The Feathers, and there, too, drinking without his knowledge was wellnigh impossible.

As for my mother, there was no limit to what she could have had for the asking from her father. But my parents hadn't come to London as dependants; they were there to make a success of the career my father had chosen for himself. So he worked in his law office early and late as well as being very active in the House.

My mother told me of a red-letter day in that early period of their life in London when my father briefed Asquith to plead a case for him. The fee marked on that brief was thirty guineas—and Asquith was one of the highest-priced Q.C.s in the United Kingdom!

The Welsh colony in London in the 'nineties included numerous successful business men, most of whom had won a dominant position in the department-store field. To this day Welshmen have had more than their share of the high-class draper's trade in London, among them such concerns as John Lewis, Dickins

and Jones, Peter Jones, D. H. Evans, to name only a few. Other migrants from Wales went in for finance, some of the most highly respected and most successful City firms bearing Welsh names. Lloyds, one of "the big five" banking institutions, was founded by Welsh financiers. And, of course, Lloyd's—the great insurance house—is world famous. So, even fifty years ago, it was possible in London to make friendships with your own kind.

Early in their stay in London my parents learned of the little Welsh chapel in Castle Street, a quiet backwater within a stone's throw of Oxford Circus, and there they met fellow-exiles with whom they established lasting friendships. Although it is a Baptist chapel, my mother went frequently to the services, in which my father took an active part. Among the older members are many who will tell you with pride that for over half a century my father *and* my mother hardly ever missed the annual Flower Day Service, and almost invariably on these occasions my father addressed the congregation extemporaneously. Speaking in his native tongue, he swayed his listeners as only a master of *hwyl* could do, giving abundant proof that the world lost a great preacher when my father elected to make politics his career.

In spite of these happy contacts, however, my mother longed for her native land. How much I had to do with this is not for me to say. But mother-love being what it is, and I having been her first-born, it would have been indeed strange had she not lived for the day when she could return to Criccieth. For I had been left behind there in my grandparents' charge when she accompanied my father to the Metropolis. The fact that I could not have been in better hands did not serve to make my mother's homesickness less a gnawing pain. After all, one hasn't to belabour the point. Separation from her infant must make any normal mother unhappy.

Of course, she had frequent letters from her father (my grandmother did not know how to write), and they were unvaryingly cheerful missives, filled with glowing details of my bouncing health and rapid growth, and all the inconsequentialities that doting grandparents take delight in voicing. Incidentally, although it was several years later before I made the discovery, none of those letters were really my grandfather's. He was merely the medium through whom my grandmother addressed her daughter.



I can see them now—a never-to-be-forgotten ritual in the evening at the end of the day's work—the docile giant of a man seated at the kitchen table methodically and painstakingly cleaning the pen-point in preparation for taking down dictation as his tiny wife bustled about the room. I have often wondered if during those years of letter-writing he ever once added a line of his own composition; I am inclined to think he never did!

I was well on into my second year when, finally, my mother came home. The occasion was no mere holiday. Back to the land of her fathers she had come in order that her second child might be born there. And so it was, on August 2, 1890, I acquired a sister, *Mair Eluned*. Dear, sweet Mair (Mary in English) was saintlike even as a child. Quite unlike the rest of us children (for I am afraid we were a bunch of roughneck youngsters), she never gave my mother a moment's anxiety. Her coming made my grandparents overjoyed. Their dream of the twin houses filled with children's laughter was coming true. If they deplored my mother's having to spend the greater part of her time with her husband in London, at least they could have the fun of watching their grandchildren grow up as true sons and daughters of Wales. And it was to be expected that as my father found his footing in the Metropolis he would be able to spend more and more time in Criccieth, making his holidays from business fit in with the Parliamentary recess. Meantime, I and my infant sister were the proverbial apples of our grandparents' eyes.

Almost as soon as I was old enough to walk I spent most of my waking hours on the beach. In those days, before an ill-advised syndicate of London speculators built a breakwater which they fondly imagined would transform Criccieth into a yachting centre and send the price of their land-holdings soaring, schooners of one hundred tons and more could moor at high tide alongside the stone jetty under the lee of the Castle Hill. (To the discomfiture of these gamblers, the predictions of the local fisherfolk came true; instead of creating an anchorage the badly sited breakwater merely caused the enclosed space to fill up with sand and shingle, a process that no amount of dredging could offset. So they quit operations before the mole was half completed, and now almost half its length has been crumbled away by the force of the sea driven against it by south-west gales. The ramp down which they used to slide the lifeboat into the surf is still there,

but even at high tide the line of breakers is a hundred yards distant from it.)

Thanks to the never-failing law of compensation there is no longer any need of a lifeboat in Criccieth Bay. When sail gave place to steam, Portmadoc as a port ceased to exist. The deep-water craft which used to delight my boyish eyes as they came and went, in and out of the bay, furled their sails for the last time and power vessels found it unprofitable to take on loads of slates, Portmadoc's sole article of export. So, instead of the wintry storms bringing frequent shipwrecks to strew the shores of the bay and give our lifeboatmen fresh opportunities to display their heroism, shipping disappeared from these waters.

But for me as a tiny tot the waterfront was a fascinating place, peopled by grizzled old fishermen and deep-water sailormen, adventurers all and made to order to be heroes in a kid's eyes. A few hundred yards inland was the *Maes*, the village green, where sheep and cattlemen swapped notes with the hillside farmers—these old greybeards hardly less intriguing in my vivid imagination than the men of the sea. There was a great difference between the waterfront and the *Maes*, however, and it accounted for my preference for the former. Both my grandfather and my father's uncle made the *Maes* their headquarters—and their presence cramped my style. Under their watchful eye I had to behave myself, and misbehaving was the breath of life to me.

In point of fact, and by virtue of a kind of squatter's sovereignty, the big wooden seat on the *Maes* was my grandfather's very own. On Fair Days, with the green thronged with thousands of farmers and breeders from miles around, no one dreamed of resting himself on this big seat unless and until he was invited to do so by my grandfather. As for my great-uncle, he was usually to be found standing on the edge of the green, a great bony hand stroking his long white beard the while he noted all that was going on and formed profoundly wise conclusions therefrom.

Looking back, I am forced to the conclusion that no boy ever had two busier disciplinarians than I had in the person of each of these two patriarchs. It was as though my grandfather, having left the unpleasant side of parental correction to his wife (in the case of my mother), deemed it only fair to take over these duties in my case. I am certain my great-uncle looked upon me as a heaven-sent opportunity to begin where he had left off in the

disciplining of my father during his boyhood. Although, as I have already pointed out, such physical chastisement as came my way was administered either by my grandmother or my mother, my movements outside the house were almost invariably under the keen-eyed scrutiny of one or both of those old men. I suppose the fact that my mother's second baby was a girl—apart from her being of an angelic disposition—made their concentrating their disciplinary measures on me only natural.

In a sense, then, it was a relief to be sent to school. I was not yet five when I entered the Board School in Criccieth, but my tender years did not spare me from being held to account as rigidly as the older pupils. I was, however, not nearly so much in awe of the schoolmaster as I was of my grandfather and my great-uncle, and I quickly discovered I could get away with mischievous tricks with far greater impunity than I could at home. My monkeyshines were of short duration, a broken leg interrupting my attendance during my first term. It led to my being terrorized in a most unexpected fashion.

For all the salutary discipline to which I was subjected, I had never been in any doubt about my grandparents' (and my great-uncle's) love. Indeed, even at that early age I knew they all doted on me, and with their excess of affection made me a more than usually spoiled youngster. If I stood in awe of them, that is not to say I was ever made to fear them. On the contrary, I always knew I richly merited whatever punishment was meted out to me. So, when I broke my leg I knew my grandparents would be overwhelmingly kind and sympathetic, babying me to my heart's content while my leg mended.

Imagine, then, my horror when—the hastily summoned doctor having set the fracture—I heard him ask my grandfather for *a saw*! How could I be expected to know that the only splint he had with him was too long for my leg, and that he wanted the saw to make it shorter? I remember as if it were yesterday the agonies I suffered while my grandfather was out of the room to fetch the saw. Horror gripped me. I died a hundred deaths as I lay there awaiting the return of my grandfather. It seemed impossible he could have complied so instantly and so cheerfully with the doctor's request. I might have been a side of beef in the butcher's shop for all he cared!

The needlessness of that agony of apprehension helped me later

to accept one of my mother's pet maxims. Nothing, she used to say, can be as bad as worrying about it. Whenever she gave voice to that sentiment I always relived the joyous moment when I heard that saw cutting its way through the wooden splint!

Another lesson that I learned as a child made a lasting impression. Following an exceptionally wild storm which had driven a ship on to the rocks and smashed her to bits, a crowd of urchins, the youngest probably twice my age, scoured the beach for salvage from the wreck. To their delight they saw a big cask washed up on to the shore. Its weight told them it was full, and they guessed its contents might be some kind of alcoholic beverage. The guess proved correct when, a gimlet having made a hole in the cask, a jet of amber-coloured liquid shot into the air. Grimy fingers stuck into the miniature fountain, and licked, removed all doubts. This was the real thing, some sort of ardent spirits. A cup was produced from somewhere and the lads drank deep of the potent stuff. By the time they were discovered they were all hopelessly drunk. The cask had contained overproof brandy!

The fact that my mother was a lifelong abstainer, and my father's never-ending war on "the Trade" (as the liquor industry was called), had less to do with my temperance as a youth than the memory of that drinking orgy. All those boys were violently sick, and in several instances death from alcoholic poisoning was averted only by the narrowest margin. At any rate, I never made the mistake of broaching a barrel of unrectified spirits for my personal consumption.

Generally I attended the Baptist chapel with my great-uncle, although when my mother made a temporary visit to Criccieth I went with her and my grandparents to Seion Chapel. I remember one occasion when, in advance of my mother's homecoming, I attended a service in her chapel in order to familiarize myself with the proceedings. At the end of the service all the children, including myself, had to line up before the pulpit and each one in turn recite a verse from the Bible. While I waited for my turn I became interested in the carved railing below the pulpit at which I stood. It was an intricate pattern, the scroll-work interspersed with holes bored through the wood. Idly, and without realizing what I was doing, I stuck a finger into one of those holes. To my dismay I discovered I could not pull it out again! The more I tried, the tighter it became wedged in!

The more frantically I jerked, the more inexorable the grip on my trapped finger became. By now I was so terrified I did not hear my name called out until it was repeated. Then, my finger holding me tight, I spoke my piece. But when this was over I was still in a fix. For each child returned to his parents after he had recited his "piece," and here I was, a prisoner at the bar!

My grandmother came bustling to the rescue just when I thought I should collapse through shame. How she managed to jerk my finger free I shall never know, but my gratitude was deep enough to make me learn *two* verses, which I recited the following Sunday, to my mother's great joy. And from that day to this I have sedulously refrained from probing holes with my fingers!

## CHAPTER IX

*Tri pheth a gynnull*  
*addyg: synwyr; syniad;*  
*a dichwain.*

To being taught—the aids are three.  
sense, feeling, opportunity.

HONOURS were showered on my mother by monarchs and lesser folk throughout her life. She appreciated them all. Not unnaturally, I feel she deserved them. The record of her public life is there for all to see. The least generously disposed of critics must agree that the sum total of her good deeds made her a worthy recipient of such honours as were bestowed upon her. But for some things no medals are struck, no titles awarded. Among such unrewarded things is motherhood.

As, I think, I have already made clear, I am a firm believer in the theory of heredity. I am certain my mother had her parents to thank for her superlative ability to combine great love and wholesome discipline. From her father came the wisdom of tolerance, from her mother she inherited her violent abhorrence of wrongdoing. And she savoured these two antagonistic qualities with a generous portion of loving forgiveness. In spite of my conviction that mine was the best mother a boy ever had—and nothing that has come under my notice in more than half a century has led me to alter my opinion by so much as a jot—I am no less convinced that, as a boy, I was definitely a rascalion.

Take, for example, that broken leg. It was an accident, of course, but it served to get me out of a sticky mess—as well as giving me a respite from attendance at school. It had its beginnings with my grandmother's giving me the money with which to buy some yeast in the town. (All of our bread was home-made in those days.) As I started down the hill a girl of my own age who lived in the adjoining house hailed me, asking me to play. I told her I had to go to town, but if she would come with me while I got the yeast I'd show her some grand fun afterwards. So off we went together.

My idea of grand fun was to dam a little stream that came tumbling down the hillside through the fields not far from the road. Having bought the yeast, I led the way across the pasture to the spot I had decided was just right for the building of the

dam. As a preliminary I carefully tucked the packet of yeast in a crevice in a near-by stone wall. Then the little girl and I got busy with the job in hand. Even at that tender age I must have had an instinctive knowledge of the principles of engineering (later to be my calling), for in no time, with the girl's assistance, I had the stream well and truly dammed. My joy was short-lived, however. When it was too late, I discovered to my dismay that the rapidly rising level of water was higher than the cranny in which I had stuffed the yeast! Now there were two kinds of yeast in those days, dry and wet, and it was the dry variety my grandmother used. It would be!

There was nothing to do except go home yeastless—and hope for the best! Happily for me, my grandmother was not at home when we got there. In a few minutes I had forgotten all about the yeast, engrossed in a game of the girl's choosing. This consisted in jumping over a low stool in the kitchen, to see who could make the longest jump. I won all right, but I slipped as I landed on the polished tiles, and fractured my thigh-bone. Thus I escaped being questioned about the missing yeast, and enjoyed a respite from school for several weeks.

(While I accepted unquestioningly my mother's teaching that Crime Does Not Pay, I nevertheless took secret delight in having so effectively escaped punishment on this occasion!)

With such all-seeing guardians as I had, however, it was seldom that I could get away with anything. If I did succeed in pulling the wool over my grandparents' eyes there was always my great-uncle to reckon with, and when he did not catch me out it was odds on that one of the other two would. And, just to make things more difficult, there was my mother to take into account—when she made one of her frequent visits to Criccieth. It was she, incidentally, who put me on the spot in a precedent-shattering fashion!

At the time I could not have been more than six years old (I remember it was before the birth of Gwilym) and was at the fidgeting age. Try as I would, I simply couldn't sit still for two consecutive minutes. And nowhere was I more restless than in chapel. If I didn't kick the foot-rest over—the resultant clatter probably causing the minister to stop abruptly in the middle of a prayer—I dropped the hymn-book, or fiddled with the black ribbon hanging from the back of the bonnet of the old lady in



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# THE CASTLE, CRICCIETH





front of me. No matter how genuinely repentant I was, no matter how earnestly I promised my mother I'd mend my ways, the next Sunday found me misbehaving as badly as ever. The climax came when, for lack of anything better to do during an especially long and unintelligible sermon, I decided to make an inventory of the contents of my pockets. From them I produced the usual amazing assortment of oddments which boys from time immemorial have tucked away—from string to fish-hooks!

It seemed to me harmless enough. At any rate I was making no noise, and I wasn't bothering anybody. But an admonitory tap on my shoulder and the look of stern disapproval in my mother's eyes told me I was being naughty again. So back I crammed the various articles into my pockets. Then, struck by a brilliant idea, I fished into the breast-pocket of my jacket and brought forth a fine-toothed comb and held it aloft for all to see. Now that especial kind of comb was used in those days for the sole purpose of extracting verminous things from children's hair! It was definitely not a thing to display with gusto in church!

Unbeknown to me at the time, my mother went into executive session with my grandparents and my great-uncle as soon as the service was over. Something, something drastic, would have to be done with me. Whose was the decision I don't know to this day, but it certainly worked. The very next Sabbath when, with my mother and my grandparents, I set foot in Seion Chapel I found my hand suddenly gripped by my grandfather. Up the aisle we went—*straight past the family pew!* Out of the corner of my eye I saw my mother and grandmother take their usual seats, but I was being led up to the *Sêt fawr* (the Big Seat) directly beneath the pulpit, in which only the deacons of the church are allowed to sit! I was never more scared in my life. But my grandfather held me with a vice-like grip, and I was powerless. Dumping me down on the seat beside him, he kept hold of my wrist throughout the service—and so overawed was I that I behaved with the decorum of a deacon, albeit a very junior one.

And so for one of the first times in the history of the Non-conformist Church in Wales (unless I am misinformed) a child habitually occupied a seat in the sacred *Sêt fawr* during a service. I suppose my grandfather was an especially privileged person, having been a deacon for forty years, and being then Senior Deacon. Anyhow, in those awesome surroundings and directly

under the eye of the minister, you can be sure I was as quiet as the proverbial mouse!

But once again my mother's insistence that all her children should be born in Criccieth necessitated her leaving London and coming home for a more than usually lengthy stay. Of course, I was still too young to grasp the significance of her settling down in Brynawelon, but it was grand to know that this was not to be a fleeting visit. Her coming meant almost as much to Mair and Olwen, too, the only difference being that they were still hardly more than babies. All of us were petted and pampered by our grandparents, but even so they weren't the same as our very own mother. And, looking back, I can see how our joy in having her with us must have filled my mother's capacious heart with gladness.

Here I must make mention of what seems to me to be a mystifying thing—so mystifying as to be impossible of explanation. In essence it is on all fours with the equally mysterious, well-authenticated means of communication over vast distances in the African jungle, by some held to be not mysterious at all but merely a system of organized drum beatings. Also comparable, and no less impossible of satisfactory explanation, is the instantaneous transmission of news in prisons—by means of the so-called "grapevine." To make myself clear, and to prove that this inexplicable mystery is not legendary, I must recount an extraordinary incident that happened as recently as June 6, 1943.

With my sister, Megan, I was spending ten days' leave from the Army in Criccieth in connection with my work on this book. Habit led me to attend the morning service on that day, a Sunday, at Seion Chapel, of which Megan is a member. She, in turn, would go with me to the evening service in my church, the Baptist chapel. Megan, however, did not feel equal to it—she had spent some weeks in her constituency (Anglesey) and was very tired. I walked to the home of William George, my father's brother. Having had tea with him and his wife, the three of us started to walk to the Baptist chapel, of which my uncle and aunt were regular members. I told my aunt a few of the newest London jokes, and she was a grand audience, laughing and asking for more in most heartening fashion. For her age (she had passed her seventieth birthday) she seemed to be in the best of health, radiating vitality and high spirits. In the chapel she left us to take her place at the organ, as usual.

She played the first hymn through to the end, and we were settling down to listen to the minister when she dropped the hymn-book on to the floor. I was nearest to her, and I stepped across the aisle to recover the book. As I straightened and handed it to her I saw her head was sagging over on to her shoulder, her lips distorted alarmingly. Then she collapsed, and would have slipped off the bench to the floor had I not put an arm around her. With others coming forward to help me I was free to hurry out and commandeer the first car I saw. (Of course, the service had ended abruptly.) So we got her home quickly and put her to bed. There was only one qualified trained nurse in Criccieth and I managed to enlist her services. A telephone call to Chester, a hundred miles distant, got me the promise of the immediate dispatch of a regular nurse by motor-car.

Before I had finished what little I could do I suppose one hour had elapsed. Deciding it would be best to be with my sister, I left my uncle's house and started across the *Maes* on my way up the hill to Brynawelon. I took the long way round—through the town. As I approached the top end of the *Maes* I saw a little group of men—all old friends—their faces reflecting unmistakable grief. Even before I came abreast of them I realized word of my aunt's seizure must have already come to their ears. Their first words as they greeted me proved this to be so. But their solemnity seemed to me to be, to say the least, premature.

"I've got a nurse coming from Chester," I told them, hoping to relieve their gloom.

For a moment they looked at me in silence. Then one of them, addressing me with the Welsh affectionate *bach*, informed me that there was nothing for a nurse to do. *My aunt was dead!*

And it was so. Within a few minutes of my leaving she had breathed her last. But what puzzles me is how news of it reached those men on the *Maes*. (Actually I had much too much to do in the hours following their announcement to give the matter thought, and since then I have not seen any of them.)

I make mention of this here because it parallels an experience that befell me almost fifty years earlier. On my way home from school one day a kindly old lady stopped me.

"So now," she said in Welsh, "you've got a baby brother, *Dic bach!*"

I looked at her in bewilderment, unable to believe my ears.

Without a word I turned and ran at top speed for home. And there, sure enough, the doctor and my smiling, proud grandparents assured me that a son had just been born to my mother! In point of fact, the infant was not yet an hour old, but its arrival and sex was known from one end of Criccieth to the other.

No humdrum explanation will satisfy me. For one thing, in the Criccieth of those days the telephone was unknown. Except by word of mouth dissemination of events of this sort was impossible. But there it was! And to this day it remains the most baffling of mysteries.

Coming back for a moment to my broken leg, it brought me what I like to think was something unique in the way of a gift to a bedridden boy. Also, it has always appeared to me to have been proof of very great big-heartedness on the part of the donor. When word of my accident was spread about the countryside an old farmer went out into his orchard and sawed off a big limb of one of his choicest trees, loaded down with beautiful ripe fruit. This he brought to Brynawelon, suggesting to my grandmother that it be hung over my bed so I could have the fun of picking an apple off the "tree" whenever I fancied one. What a treat it was for a four-year-old boy!

And finally, there is the matter of that yeast. Of course a telegram was sent to my mother telling of my accident, and of course she took the first train to Criccieth to see the invalid. By the time she arrived I was no longer in pain, but with the leg in plaster-of-paris I suppose I looked as if I needed sympathy. As always, however, my mother was quiet and business-like as she asked me to tell her just what happened. When I said Mattie (the little girl next door) had accosted me on my way to town she said:

"What were you going to town for?"

"To get some yeast for *Nain*," I said.

"Well," said my mother, "did you get the yeast?"

So it was she who brought to light my dereliction. (I felt safe enough from any danger of punishment not to invent one of my usual fairy-tales.) And not until she told my grandmother of my confession did anybody remember the reason for my errand. How like my mother to get to the bottom of the business straight away! Evasion never worked with her.

Incidentally, this seems to be the right place to make known a

fact that will doubtless surprise non-Welsh readers. Not only as a child but up to the time I entered my teens, I did not know many words of English—with the exception of scholastic terms. Even the other children, who spent the greater part of their time in London, had to learn English when they were of school age. Welsh was the only language spoken in our house, my grandmother going to her grave having spoken hardly a word of English.

It may be of interest to students of comparative philology to learn that in Welsh schools the only subject that is taught entirely in English is mathematics. Thus I learned that *two and two make four* and was taught how to *add, subtract, multiply* and *divide*.

The Welsh system of numerology is very difficult, and to my mind unnecessarily complicated, making it very cumbersome for ordinary everyday transactions. I have "little Latin and less Greek," so any comparisons I make must be to Spanish. However, after all, we in Wales absorbed any Latin we required into our language much as they did in Spain. *Lladron* (Welsh), *Ladrones* (Spanish)—which looks as if there were not any thieves in Wales before the Romans came! "Taffy was a Welshman," etc., is therefore obviously unfair!

We start off with our counting quite all right—*un, dau, tri*; Spanish, *uno, dos, tres*; but then we get *pedwar*, which bears no possible resemblance to *quatro*. It is this curious mixture of Latin derivatives and something much older which makes our higher numbers very complicated. A doctor tells you to say *ninety-nine*, but if he asked you to say it in Welsh, probably both his stethoscope and his ear-drums would be damaged. *Ninety-nine* in Welsh is: *Pedwar ar bymtheg a phedwar ugain*; literal translation is: *Four and fifteen and four twenties*. Making such heavy weather of these comparatively simple numbers has always puzzled me, but I did discover a purpose. I attended a farm sale some years ago near Llandudno, and the auctioneer was obviously striving hard to get a hundred guineas bid for a very fine gelding. He had got them to push it up to £97 and was rolling this figure out like a litany: "*Dwy bunt ar bymtheg a phedwar ugain!*" He drew out and lengthened his syllables most impressively, and then repeated the amount, it saved a lot of patter—he almost got into the *hwyl*. Anyway, he got his hundred.

## CHAPTER X

*Rheibusaf un yn holl wlad  
Gymru, yw'r un deudroediawg  
a wyr lefaru.*

No beast through Wales so ravenous  
stalks  
As that two-legged beast who talks.

AT the turn of the century my mother had undoubtedly come to the obvious conclusion that politics, rather than the law, was to be my father's prime concern. There was no question about his growing stature in Parliament, and if even the rashest of prophets might have refused to forecast the facts of his future career there was general agreement that he would at least win many honours as a statesman. So far as my mother was concerned, at this period of their life together I am inclined to believe it made little difference whether success came to him as a solicitor or as an M.P. Her one overriding interest was the wellbeing of her family.

Indirectly the Boer War constituted a menace to our wellbeing. Indeed, this is an understatement. My father's life was threatened. No one better than my mother realized by what a narrow margin he escaped being murdered at the hands of a mob of would-be assassins. No one better than she appreciated the moral and physical courage that enabled him to defy that mob. But great as his bravery was, I count my mother's no less magnificent.

Of course, students of history have not to be told the facts of that Birmingham mob's attempt to kill my father. It suffices here to present those facts through my mother's eyes. (At the time I was still too young fully to comprehend the agony of terror which my mother must have suffered on that shameful night.) In short, it was my father's conviction that the British Empire was wickedly wrong in sending troops against the Dutch settlers of South Africa. As he saw it, it was not merely a case of using a pile-driver to crack a walnut, a shameless giant's smashing a pigmy; he was certain the unjustifiable attack had for its prime purpose the enriching of British capitalists whose greedy eyes were fixed on the gold and diamond mines which would be theirs once the Boers were beaten to their knees. Perhaps because he knew so well how his own countrymen had had to struggle through the ages against vastly more powerful enemies, his hatred of this looting expedition was all the more intense.

This, anyhow, was what I understood to be my father's reason for being opposed to the war. And even I could grasp the difference between that attitude and being pro-Boer. Probably the jingo patriots would have hated my father less if he had been animated by great love of the South African Dutch. But it was not the charge which they levelled at him—that he was pro-Boer—that made him hated. It was because he dared to suggest that the British soldier had no real reason for fighting the Boers at all that filled the mob with a burning desire to tear him limb from limb.

How well my mother realized that this was the case I do not know. Knowing her, however, I should say she was fully aware of the peril in which her husband stood. It is not difficult to picture, then, the anxiety that must have filled her when he told her he had accepted an invitation to address a public meeting in Birmingham, a hotbed of warmongers, to whom the mere mention of the Lloyd George name was like a red rag to a bull. On the other hand, she knew he could not decline the invitation and keep his self-respect. Not to address that meeting would be to brand himself a coward. And in my mother's lexicon that word had no place. It was as unthinkable in her mind as it was in his that he should play safe. Of course he must go to Birmingham.

I should be sorry to create the impression that I belittle my father's courage by saying I think my mother was every whit as courageous in letting him go. There must have been uppermost in her mind her position as the mother of four young children if suddenly she were to find herself a widow. But what she owed to us was not the end of her obligations. A no less binding one compelled her to bid her husband God-speed on the journey so fraught with dreadful possibilities.

I am reminded of a story Mark Twain is said to have told to Queen Victoria when that monarch crowned his visit to England by giving him an audience. It was, incidentally, the telling of that story which later accounted for the arrival in England of the Poet of the Sierras, Joaquín Miller. The story went like this:

The Daughters of the American Revolution resident in Seattle, Washington, had raised a fund with which a statue of George Washington, arrayed in his general's uniform, had been commissioned and paid for. To preside at the unveiling of the statue they invited the California poet to come to Seattle,



complete with a poem especially composed for the occasion. Miller accepted the invitation and turned up on the appointed day. But after he had been introduced to the great gathering, predominantly female, he began the proceedings with a tongue-lashing of all of them that left them dumb with shocked amazement.

In effect, he said he was downright ashamed of them! Here they'd gone and spent good money on yet another statue of yet another warrior—and this in a world already surfeited with such memorials. Why were they such fools as thus to glorify war? Hadn't they sense enough to know that such glorification might easily be the cause of their losing their own flesh and blood in needless battles? Only one community within his ken had women of wisdom within its confines. And there, to the best of his knowledge, was the one spot on earth where homage—expressed in sculptured marble—had been paid to a *woman*! The community, he told them, was New Orleans, the woman a great-hearted philanthropist who gave starving people food during a famine in Louisiana.

Having finished excoriating his hearers, he then explained that what he had had to say to them was the inspiration that had led him to compose the poem which he would now read. (There are many who hold that this poem ranks higher even than his *Columbus*.) The point is contained in the first two lines:

The bravest battles that ever were fought  
Were fought by the mothers of men.

If my mother had known all the facts (which, actually, to this day are known to very few), I think she would have gone to Birmingham with her husband. For the facts, as they afterwards came to light, make it an odds on bet that my father was going to his death. The first intimation of the murderous intentions of the mob reached the Liberal Club in Birmingham at noon of the day of the meeting, when the conspirators had the effrontery to drop in the club's letter-box several forged tickets. These were so perfectly imitated that they could not be told from the genuine tickets, distribution of which had been painstakingly made. Obviously the Town Hall would be packed with holders of the spurious tickets.

The committee did what it could at this eleventh hour. Across

the front of the stage they hastily erected a broad platform, raised above the level of the floor, but lower than the stage level. This, they hoped, would afford an adequate barrier to any massed attacking force from the body of the hall. On this platform tables and chairs were placed for the small army of newspaper reporters whom editors, scenting a sensation, had sent to Birmingham from all parts of the Kingdom. As a further precaution 500 policemen surrounded the Town Hall, all carrying truncheons.

It is ancient history that the police were overwhelmed, the Town Hall's windows smashed by fusillades of stones, the entrance doors smashed in by a hundred madmen wielding an uprooted telegraph pole as a battering-ram. It is also on record that one policeman was killed and many injured in the *mélée*. There are a dozen versions of my father's escape, none of them true. Naturally I know how it was effected, but I see no reason to divulge the facts. (After all, there may come a day when another honest, courageous man may find himself similarly in jeopardy. I have no wish to lessen the chances of such a one to escape with his life.)

Of course, at the time, my mother had no knowledge of what was transpiring in Birmingham. But, the night finding me at home in London on one of my infrequent holidays, I do know every minute of that evening was a period of agonizing suspense for her. I remember her going to the telephone again and again—the first call shortly after eight o'clock and thereafter at frequent intervals—to ring up Harold Spender, a stalwart and staunch supporter of my father and a great friend of my mother. He was in touch with Fleet Street, and from him she knew she could get the truth, brutal though it might be.

Actually it was not until after midnight that he had any news for her at all. And it was not until then that her anxiety gave place to great relief. (He didn't tell her that the reporter who had been sent to cover the meeting had been locked in the besieged Town Hall until after midnight, and could not get to the post office to telegraph the story.) But in later years my mother came to know by how narrow a margin her husband escaped death that night in Birmingham.

This seems to me to be an appropriate place to set forth one of the many published tributes paid to my mother shortly after her death, its appositeness latent in the eulogizing of her courage, poise and dignity by implication. Here is what Sir Alfred T. Davies,

K.B.E., C.B., former Permanent Secretary of the Board of Education's Welsh Department, wrote:

"The fame, transient though it usually is, which is enjoyed by the wives of great men is seldom other than reflected glory derived from their illustrious husbands. Such was not the case, however, with the gracious lady to whose memory I now venture to pay my humble tribute. It is true that by her marriage Margaret Owen, as she then was, acquired a name which in after years was to become famous the world over.

But the niche—and that no small one—which she afterwards came to occupy in the hearts of her fellow-countrymen was of her own carving.

No virtues have need to be attributed to her which she did not actually possess and later come to dignify by the grace with which she wore them.

Her natural sphere, it is true, was in her home. But she could—and did—hold her own with the great ones of the land, with whom in later years she was destined to be brought into close and even intimate contact.

Best known in her native county of Caernarvonshire, to which (and especially to her beloved Criccieth) she remained loyal to the last day of her life, Dame Margaret Lloyd George deliberately eschewed the lure of the city and even also the attractions of her husband's adopted countryside in heather-clad Surrey. This she did in order that she might the better serve her day and generation in 'her own place.'"

In a corner of the grounds at Brynawelon Megan has made a little flower-garden which she calls the Garden of Memory. In it are all the flowers my mother loved most, and its unostentatious simplicity would have pleased her mightily.

## CHAPTER XI

*Gweddw pwyll heb amynedd.*

Till perseverance it doth wed  
Talent has a barren bed.

YEARS seem to me to become less and less distinguishable one from another the longer one lives. An incident that happened when I was, say, five years old I can definitely fix as having occurred in 1894. Later, infinitely more important incidents I cannot fix in any such fashion. It may be that other men on the wrong side of fifty can look back and differentiate between, say, 1920 and 1921, but in my case I should be at a loss to say with any degree of certainty whether a given occurrence took place ten or fifteen years ago. So, although I am trying to follow a chronological order to the best of my ability, I am quite prepared to be found guilty of getting my dates mixed more than once in these pages. With this said, I intend to confine what now follows to events in the period 1905-10.

Midway through this period my sister Mair died. Unquestionably it was the most dreadful tragedy my mother and my father ever knew. In point of fact, I believe the cruel blow did more to crush my father than any other happening in his fourscore years. I know he was more inconsolable in his grief than my mother was. This is not to say his love of Mair was greater than my mother's, his sense of loss more agonizing. Actually—and, because of his interests outside the home, naturally—he was not nearly so close to the saintlike child as my mother was. As with Olwen and Megan, my mother's relations with Mair were something more than the usual mother-and-daughter relationship. They were all girls together, my mother the gayest and youngest of the lot! And I am sure my two living sisters will agree that neither of them was anywhere near so lovable as Mair. So her death—just as she was emerging from girlhood into womanhood—should have prostrated my mother.

I have from an outside source evidence of what the tragedy did to my father. According to my informant, the news reached him when he was taking part in an especially hectic debate in the Commons. The effect on him was instantaneous and shocking. From the dynamic, puissant battler he became a broken, palsied

old man. With head bowed and with uncertain, groping footsteps he made his stricken way out of the House and into the street. A friend, apprehensive lest my father might be run over by a vehicle, made it his business to walk along with him. It was plain to see my father was oblivious of his surroundings, his eyes fixed on the pavement, his weary feet shuffling along like a sleep-walker's.

Presently my father turned in to a tea-shop, his friend still at his elbow. It was not until he had finished the cup of tea that he broke the silence.

"You know what success I have had," he then said. "You know how much the future seems to hold for me. Well, I'd give all I have and forgo all that is to be—if only I could have her back."

As for the effect on my mother, I think it finds perfect expression in the inscription which she had put on the white marble tombstone in the Criccieth cemetery. The words are the very last ones that the dying girl uttered, ending a little colloquy with her nurse. Quite calmly she asked the Sister if she were going to die. And when the nurse made no attempt to mislead her, poor little Mair said reverently:

"He is wise and merciful."

And this is what my mother had inscribed on the tombstone as Mair's epitaph. Even with her dying brèath the child did the thing she knew would make her mother happy—giving utterance to unfaltering faith in a loving God. Even though my mother's faith needed no bolstering, her grief must have been largely assuaged by this serene certainty with which her beloved daughter went to face the Unknown.

At any rate, I was old enough to be able to note the difference between my mother's and father's reactions under the stunning blow. Making allowance for the difference in their natures, I still think my father suffered more than my mother from a feeling of the irreparability of the loss.

Also, being eighteen, I was old enough to have my own opinion of the sad visitation. I know it was Mair's goodness that was the direct cause of her death. Had she been less selfless, less saintlike, she would have told her mother of the pain in her side long before it reached an agonizing stage. But at the time she was swotting up for school exams, and she knew how keen her father was for her to pass with honours. Also she knew how worried

her mother would be if she had an inkling of the truth. So she bore the pain with stoic fortitude until it was too late. Appendicitis at that time had yet to become a fashionable ailment. It is altogether possible, even if Mair had let anyone know when the pains first began, that an incorrect diagnosis might have been made. As it was, the operation was delayed too long to be of any avail.

So dear little Mair was the first to find a final resting-place in what we now call the "family" vault in the cemetery in Criccieth, its second occupant being my mother. Thus far the tombstone erected at the time of Mair's death has sufficed to mark the grave of my mother as well, the stone being inscribed with her name, following that of her daughter's. This thick slab of white marble is unusual in that the reverse side has been cut away to form a niche in which is a beautifully sculptured bust of my sister. I remember going many times with my mother to Goscombe John's studio while he was at work on the bust. He had only a photograph from which to create a likeness, but with my mother's help he finally succeeded in transforming the marble effigy into a perfect reproduction of Mair's lovely, wide-eyed serenity. The curious thing about it is that only when you stand directly in front of the plinth can you see the bust, the stone being cut away so deeply that no part of the sculptured figure obtrudes beyond the plane of the surface.

With the exception of this tragedy, this five-year period found us all as happy and as eager for each tomorrow as only kids whose parents are blessed with young hearts can be. One outstanding thing about our various addresses in London was that once you were over the threshold you were in Wales. In the thirty years during which my mother kept house in London she never once had an English servant in her employ. Whether in our early, less pretentious abodes or when we were ensconced in the two houses in Downing Street, every one of the household staff was Welsh. As and when an additional servant was required my mother sent word to Criccieth, and up to town came yet another native of Snowdonia. More often than not these immigrants could not speak a word of English, but of course this made no difference inside our four walls. Welsh was the only language ever used within the family circle while it was a circle.

Now on one occasion, when I was about fifteen and had not

acquired much of an English vocabulary, a new cook arrived from Criccieth whose knowledge of English was nil. So my mother instructed me to go with her to do the day's marketing. For dinner she had decided to have roast chicken, and the principal part of my job was to convoy the cook to the poulterer's, where she would pick out the two likeliest-looking fowls, the while I did such talking as might be necessary. Everything went according to plan—cook having pointed to the two plumpest, tenderest birds—until the poulterer asked me if I wished them “drawn and trussed.” What drawn and trussed meant I hadn't the foggiest idea, but I fancied it involved an additional cash outlay, and I was not going to be had. So I said we could do without this being done, thank you very much, and off we went with the two chickens as they were. And so they were put in the oven and duly roasted—without their innards having been “drawn”! My mother rose to the occasion with the customary tact. To save trouble—she said—she would carve in the kitchen, and my father and his guests enjoyed the fowls immensely. I daren't look at my mother!

Not only domestic servants, any kind of workers whom my mother had occasion to engage were invariably Welsh. There was the time, for instance, when my mother decided that our house (we were then living in Wandsworth) needed repainting. Instead of giving the job to a local painter, she wrote to James Evans, a master painter in Criccieth, and asked him to come to London to do the job. He not only came, he brought an assistant with him—neither of them able to speak many words of English. As is the custom in Wales (in the case of dressmakers, tailors, travelling shoemakers, furniture repairers and the like), the painter and his assistant made themselves members of the family during the fortnight the job lasted, eating their meals with us and giving us all the latest news of Caernarvonshire. Nor was this all. My mother's subscribing to the theory that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy was backed up by a more than usually lively sense of her obligations as a hostess. In addition to giving them a home from home she thought it was incumbent on her to provide them with amusement.

“*Dic bach,*” she said to me one evening, “I think James and David would enjoy an evening in the West End. I want you to take them to see the sights. Here is a sovereign.”

This was a grand job for me, then perhaps sixteen. I can't be

positive, but I think it was the first time I had ever been given a latchkey, the first time my mother treated me as a grown-up. But I was not so much overcome by a feeling of self-importance as to be unmindful of the chance thus afforded to have a bit of additional fun out of the adventure. With what I hoped was the correct manner of one man-of-the-world confiding to another I told the master painter it would never do for him to appear in the West End in his workaday clothes. For the West End, after nightfall, it was absolutely essential to "dress." Perhaps that Welsh custom of putting on one's Sunday best as a preliminary to going off on a holiday accounted for James's consenting to be guided by me in the matter of sartorial proprieties. In any event, he raised no objections to donning a pair of striped trousers and a black frock-coat (purloined from my father's wardrobe), the formal garments made the more impressive by the black silk hat which I assured him he must wear. So, thus fearfully and wonderfully arrayed, he fared forth with me and his assistant to hit the highspots of the West End.

At the outset of the pub-crawl a twin-difficulty arose. First, I was too young to enter a public-house. Second, neither James nor David could speak much English. I knew the master painter liked his glass of beer, and on an occasion like this it was unthinkable that he should be dry. So I told him (in Welsh) that all he had to do was to walk up to the bar, put sixpence on it and say "Bitter." I wasn't too sure of the prevailing prices in the West End, but I told him he would probably get some change with the drink. After a bit of practice, as we rode along towards Piccadilly Circus in the old horse-bus, he could say "Bitter" well enough to make himself understood. And during the long evening he left his assistant and me outside a staggering number of pubs the while he quenched his thirst and improved his English pronunciation!

Everybody, especially her servants, was infected with my mother's comicality. It was as if, from association with her, an irresistible desire to be funny was born in the mind of the most chronic of dyspeptics. (Although the instance that comes to my mind actually happened subsequent to 1910 I include it here as proof of my mother's ability to make those about her no less impish than was she herself.)

It was during the height of the Suffragette demonstrations in



London, and while we were in residence at No. 11 Downing Street, that a few especially fanatical females managed to get past the police and chain themselves to the iron railings outside Nos. 10 and 11. One of my mother's young servants—newly arrived from Criccieth and filled to the brim with my mother's treating the Movement as a joke—came home from her evening "out," and satisfied the constable on duty at the Whitehall end of Downing Street that she was employed in the house of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. But having got past him she started to run, screaming "Votes for women!" at the top of her voice. Before the scores of police constables who came dashing out from their hiding-places could intercept her the maid tore down the stone steps at No. 11, and let herself in by the service entrance.

When Sarah, our grand old faithful, confronted the excited constables at the service door she was dignity personified as she asked them what they meant by swarming down into the doorway in that fashion. Their spokesman insisted a Suffragette had just run down the steps and must be in hiding in the house. The life of the Chancellor was in danger!

Meanwhile my mother, having got the truth from the now somewhat abashed maid, made her way to the service entrance and pacified the policemen. And, of course, she did not so much as reprimand that maid. On the contrary, I am sure she was delighted.

Incidentally, and as proof that my mother's seeming extravagance in importing labour from Wales was in fact sound business judgment, she told me that the whole cost of repainting our house—including two return fares and the two men's keep for a fortnight—was substantially less than a London contractor would have charged. More important in her eyes, the job was much better done than any London painter would have done it. You see, James Evans was not only a master of his trade, he mixed his own paints. And whatever he put into the mixture gave it a degree of permanency not to be found in ordinary commercial paints.

It was at the beginning of this five-year period, when I was fifteen, that my mother told me a secret which (only now recalling it to mind) enables me to be less vague as to the length of time during which my father courted her. She said a day was near when she would celebrate the twentieth anniversary of her decision to marry my father. As to this I fancy my father could

not provide confirmation if I asked him for it. But I do know that in his diary for 1885 appears this entry:

“After taking the chair at the debating Society soirée I took Maggie Owen home.”

Doubtless Hansard for the years 1905-10 contain many passages that form imperishable proof that my father was vitally concerned with matters infinitely more important than the date in 1905 which my mother counted epochal. In this I not unnaturally side with my mother. For if the chairman of that debating society soirée had *not* taken Maggie Owen home it is quite possible I might never have been born! This, I hasten to add, is an egotistical way of saying my mother held the date memorable as marking the beginning of her career as a mother.

What does *not* appear in Hansard, what to the best of my knowledge is unknown even to the most intimate friends of my mother and father, is a feature of our home life that lasted for probably ten years. (Only Megan, because she was too young, was denied the privilege of the unusual form of home education which my mother devised.) It began when I was just entering my teens, and continued until Gwilym was, perhaps, fifteen. It arose out of the fact that Welsh was the only language used within our four walls. This being so, our reading in *English* was very largely confined to our school-books. We were, therefore, hopelessly ignorant of contemporary and classical literature. To remedy this defect my mother prevailed upon my father to tell us (in Welsh) many of the great works of fiction of modern and ancient times.

Those were unforgettable evenings. With Mair and Olwen and Gwilym I used to sit spellbound as my father unfolded the thrilling narratives that Dumas, Hugo and Scott, and other notables of a bygone age had written. *Les Misérables* was my especial favourite, *The Count of Monte Cristo* a close second. Of the (then) modern authors, Stanley Weyman appealed most to me. As I look back on it now, having become in later years an omnivorous reader, I am convinced any author would find himself in debt to my father—for telling his tale better than he wrote it. Necessarily these evening sessions were a case of to-be-continued-in-our-next. The time at my father's disposal was limited, and curfew for us kids was strictly observed by my mother. But always my father

managed to ring down the curtain when our suspense was at the peak! To hear what would happen next made us live for the following evening. Had there been cinemas in those days—no matter what the counter-attraction—you could not have seduced one of us away from those after-dinner tales.

I have already said my father was a preacher at fifteen. Wales knows him as a master of *hwyl*. The world has acclaimed him as a great statesman. My own opinion—and I am sure it is shared by his other children—is that he could have been a great *actor*! Neither in chapel, at the Eisteddfod, nor on the floor of the House of Commons did my father sway his hearers as he did his four children in his home. He made you believe he *was Jean Valjean*! Into every character he immersed himself until you forgot it was he who was telling the story, and saw in him only the characters he so perfectly brought to life.

And here is a curious thing that is essentially Welsh. Not only in the matter of *numbers* of books is there a paucity of Welsh literature; Welshmen go in for reading less than any other literate people I know. Both my grandparents seldom looked at a printed page (save only the Welsh Bible and hymn-book), nor was my mother overmuch given to reading. News was spread by word of mouth, and verbal anecdotage took the place of written fiction. *Scholarship* was, and is, highly treasured, but reading was, and is, largely confined to the curricula of educational institutions. We Welsh have always preferred the thrust and parry of a debate to what, after all, is a solo pastime. And from these *passages des mots* I am sure there comes no whit less well developed a culture than from intensive reading. At any rate, I'd rather listen to my father retell even a mediocre story than read the most engrossing piece of fiction.

Recurring to that dream of my grandparents which had its outward expression in the twin houses on the Portmadoc road, they both went to their graves without ever seeing it come wholly, satisfyingly true. Of all the children, only I spent the greater part of my childhood with them. The others my mother kept with her in London. On occasions she brought them to Criccieth, but inasmuch as this nearly always involved leaving my father alone in London, her stay was generally short. But always we spent Christmas in Wales. And what fun it was—what fun those Christmas parties still would be, if only they could be repeated!

Even the near-tragedy that marked one such Christmas celebration was transformed into a more than ever merry one. When we had all forgathered (a day or two before the feast-day) a cold spell set in that presently made it seem as if the bottom must drop out of the thermometer! The oldest inhabitant could remember nothing approaching the icy cold that now held the countryside in a remorseless grip. Our newly built twin houses were as nearly weather-proof as honest materials and construction could make them, but they were not igloos. So on Christmas morning we awoke to discover that every water-pipe in both houses was frozen. This, in turn, meant we could not use the kitchen range—the hot-water system being connected with it. So for a time it looked as if we should have to go without the sumptuous Christmas dinner that had still to be cooked.

It was here my mother stepped into the breach. Who cared about the kitchen stove, she demanded. Even if it could be used without bursting all the water-pipes, the whole house was so bitterly cold there'd be no fun in eating a dinner with chattering teeth. On the other hand, *the cellar* was warm, and a fire could be made there and the dinner cooked well enough to make do. And so down to the cellar we all went, and had the jolliest Christmas feast ever—by candle-light!

## CHAPTER XII

*Bychan y tal cynghor gwraig;  
ond gwae wr nas cymero.*

A wife's advice will seldom better  
make it;  
But woe betide the man who does  
not take it.

DOWNING STREET became our London *pied à terre* in 1908 when my father was made Chancellor of the Exchequer. Previous to this we had been living at Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, near the home of the sage Thomas Carlyle. By this time I suppose my mother was reconciled to the thought that London was to be her husband's permanent abiding-place. But so far as she was concerned it could never be her home. Certainly she had no illusions about the permanence of No. 11 as an address. It would be ours only as long as this political appointment lasted. For under the rules of the game No. 11 is reserved for the Chancellor of the Exchequer exclusively.

This world-famous street is a most curious anomaly. It consists of a backwater off Whitehall with the imposing Foreign Office building on one side and two very unpretentious Georgian dwelling-houses on the other backing on to the main Treasury building. It seems that almost every tenant of either No. 10 or No. 11 must have at one time or another made some "improvement" or alteration to the interior, until now there is a labyrinth of cubby-holes and passages extending from the top end at No. 11 down to Whitehall. The old exteriors of the houses remain as they have been for a good many years. They escaped the Blitz miraculously, although the Treasury itself received dire attention.

No. 11, where we lived from 1908 until 1916, is much more of a comfortable home than No. 10. This is due to the fact that the latter is much more of an "office," as far as the ground floor is concerned, than the former. My mother, certainly, preferred No. 11. She had a very fine dining-room downstairs and a large drawing-room and another room for herself on the first floor. The bedrooms were roomy and comfortable—in fact, there was certainly more of the atmosphere of a home than was the case in No. 10.

Mrs. Asquith (as she was then) certainly attempted some im-

provements, including the provision of an electric lift, in No. 10, but with the comings and goings into the Cabinet Room and the various offices on the ground floor, it was very difficult to feel at home in the Prime Minister's house. The electric lift, a comparatively new departure in 1908, behaved itself rather embarrassingly in its early career, and, I believe, on more than one occasion caused the tenants and their friends to be temporarily imprisoned.

At the back, walled off from the Horse Guards Parade, there is a good-sized garden common to both houses, and on many a summer evening I have looked down from my bedroom window when a party was in progress, and watched the guests flitting to and fro amongst the gaily illuminated shrubs and trees. Outside the Cabinet Room and on one side of the garden there is a stone-flagged terrace where many an important conversation has been carried on and where many a momentous decision has been formed. Many a time have members of the Government of the day paced up and down these historic flagstones anxiously awaiting news from abroad.

The Suffragettes were the bane of our lives in those days, and numerous police were on duty day and night on all sides of the two houses. I remember causing a considerable commotion one night on my return from work. I went upstairs to my room and found that my light had fused. Those were the transition days between the new gas-filled electric bulbs and the older vacuum lights with carbon filaments. I had one of the latter, rather a large one. It was broken, and some devil made me drop it out of the window on to the terrace below. It went off like a bomb! The commotion was terrific. From my eyrie up aloft I watched the police running round in circles looking for the culprits and the damage. Conversation at breakfast next morning was difficult, especially when my mother asked me: had I heard the bomb?

Those foolish publicity-seeking women have never yet found their right place in history. To say that they were instrumental in gaining for women the right to vote is just not true. In point of fact they delayed the granting of the franchise, which would have been brought about as a normal act of the Liberal Government in due course. Ministers, especially those of such standing and personality as constituted the Government in those early years, will not tolerate bullying. My father, who was definitely in favour of extending the franchise, found himself antagonized by

## DAME MARGARET

these stupid, crude methods of propaganda. Asquith himself had not, I think, quite made up his mind about giving the women the vote. With his fine, calm, judicial sense, he weighed up the pros and cons, and came to the conclusion that the only effect would be to double the electorate and the cost of an election without much effect on the country's weal. And how right he was! But to the Suffragettes it made no difference, friend or foe, all had to suffer from their imbecilities. Men-sympathizers joined in the fun. Mr. Winston Churchill was Home Secretary about that time, and as such had to devise measures both to keep the peace and protect his own colleagues. He was the victim of several cowardly attacks.

My mother was characteristically vehement in her denunciations of these misguided (to use a kind adjective) females. It was the complete idiocy of the whole thing that aroused her just ire. "How on earth," she would say, "does putting vitriol in a pillar-box help them to get the vote?—it merely emphasizes their irresponsibility."

The whole unpleasant period of madness had, of course, its humorous side. The National Eisteddfod was held in London at the Albert Hall during this "campaign," and the Suffragettes wasted no opportunity. At one of the sessions one of my mother's friends was a steward in the main body of the hall, and when the interruptions started he attempted to restore order. He was promptly seized by the police and bundled out despite his vehement protests!

Parliament, during this period, although subject to disturbances, carried on much as usual, refusing to be deviated from its ordinary legislative course. One afternoon some young women managed to gain entrance as visitors and chained themselves to the grille in the Ladies' Gallery. Whilst they were being removed with considerable difficulty and trouble, the House was, naturally, in some turmoil. The Speaker, Mr. Lowther (now Viscount Ullswater), whose canopied chair was immediately beneath the commotion, got up and calmly remarked: "I think I am the only Member who cannot see what is going on." This restored good humour and order. The Member who had been the innocent cause of all the trouble by giving the termagants their tickets naturally came in for a lot of bantering.

As a striking illustration of the difference between men battlers

in the House of Commons my father's *passage des mots* with Mr. Churchill could not be better. By the same token no one better than Mr. Churchill could tell the story. So here in his own words, as they appear in his book *My Early Life*, a book every young man ought to read, is an account of the beginning of their Parliamentary battling:

"I learned that a rising young Welshman, a pro-Boer, and one of our most important bugbears, named Lloyd George, who from below the gangway was making things very difficult for the leaders of the Liberal Party, would probably be called about nine o'clock. He had a moderately phrased amendment on the paper, but whether he would move it was not certain. I gathered that I could, if I wished, have the opportunity of following him. In those days, and indeed for many years, I was unable to say anything (except a sentence in rejoinder) that I had not written out and committed to memory beforehand. I had never had the practice which comes to young men at the University of speaking in small debating societies impromptu upon all sorts of subjects. I had to try to foresee the situation and to have a number of variants ready to meet its possibilities. I therefore came with a quiverful of arrows of different patterns and sizes, some of which I hoped would hit the target. My concern was increased by the uncertainty about what Mr. Lloyd George would do. I hoped that the lines I had prepared would follow fairly well from what he would probably say.

The hour arrived. I sat in the corner seat above the gangway, immediately behind the Ministers, the same seat from which my father had made his speech of resignation and his terrible Piggott attack. On my left, a friendly counsellor, sat the long-experienced Parliamentarian, Mr. Thomas Gibson Bowles. Towards nine o'clock the House began to fill. Mr. Lloyd George spoke from the third bench below the gangway on the Opposition side, surrounded by a handful of Welshmen and Radicals, and backed by the Irish Nationalist party. He announced forthwith that he did not intend to move his amendment, but would instead speak on the main question. Encouraged by the cheers of the 'Celtic fringes' he soon became animated and even violent. I constructed in succession sentence after sentence to hook on with after he should sit down. Each



of these poor couplings became in turn obsolete. A sense of alarm and even despair crept across me. I repressed it with an inward gasp. Then Mr. Bowles whispered, 'You might say, "Instead of making his violent speech without moving his moderate amendment, he had better have moved his moderate amendment without making his violent speech."' Manna in the wilderness was not more welcome! It fell only just in time. To my surprise, I heard my opponent saying that he 'would curtail his remarks as he was sure the House wished to hear a new member,' and with this graceful gesture he suddenly resumed his seat.

I was up before I knew it, and reciting Tommy Bowles's rescuing sentence. It won a general cheer. Courage returned. I got through all right. The Irish—whom I had been taught to detest—were a wonderful audience. They gave just the opposition which would help, and said nothing they thought would disturb. They did not seem the least offended when I made a joke at their expense. . . .

After this debate I first made the acquaintance of Mr. Lloyd George. We were introduced at the Bar of the House of Commons. After compliments he said, 'Judging from your sentiments, you are standing against the Light.' I replied, 'You take a singularly detached view of the British Empire.' Thus began an association which has persisted through many vicissitudes."

I quote from Mr. Churchill's book thus extensively not only to show how the "association" between him and my father has "persisted," but also because it seems to me to be a perfect illustration of the way the game is played in the Commons. A man unversed in the ways of Parliament, having heard from his seat in the Strangers' Gallery my father and Mr. Churchill metaphorically tearing the hide off one another, would have found it difficult to believe that once they crossed the Bar of the House they made no attempt to conceal the fact that they were the best of friends! By this I do not mean to impugn the sincerity of either of them. Their political animosity was real. It was no play-acting, the one filling the hero's rôle, the other the villain's. But both men appreciated and respected the right of each to hold divergent (political) opinions. And once the battling on the Floor

of the House was temporarily finished they found nothing incongruous in expressing their personal regard, one for the other.

If this seems to have no bearing on my main theme, it is only seemingly so. For in those early days of my father's Parliamentary career my mother was a frequent visitor to the House. That she consented to reappear there after her first visit is striking proof of her admiration for her husband's skill as a debater. For she considered the grille behind which visitors in the Ladies' Gallery had to sit a monstrous affront to her sex! Why, she demanded of my father, should such a relic of the Dark Ages be there? Was this the twentieth century, and was this the British Parliament? Or were we back in Elizabethan times? Were British women properly to be treated as inmates of a Turkish nabob's harem? Apart from this aspect of the indignity thus suffered by British womanhood, that grille annoyed my mother on two other counts. It not only made it most difficult to see what was going on, it made it almost impossible to hear the speakers. (In later years the archaic grille was removed, but whether my mother's violent objection to it had to do with its removal I do not know.)

The pertinent fact is that my mother took a great liking to Mr. Churchill long before they met. Perhaps the fact that he was twelve years her husband's junior had something to do with it. For until he appeared on the scene it was my father's youth that had made his earlier Parliamentary triumphs the more notable. And now here was another youngster—doing to him what he had done to Gladstone!

A good clean scrap appealed to my mother, additional disproof of that legendary saintliness which she would have been the first to have labelled stuff and nonsense. And because this young newspaper man, recently returned from the Boer War, proved his ability to hold his own in these fights with her husband she decided he was the right sort—even if he had the misfortune not to be Welsh!

How could she have been expected—then—to envisage a day when this same War Correspondent would be the moving spirit in a grand jollification on the French Riviera to celebrate the Golden Anniversary of her wedding?

But it is high time for laughter, my mother would surely interpolate at this point, were she here to act as my editor. So I present for your amusement the story that made us children

laugh more immoderately than any other one our mother ever told us. (It may not fit in here chronologically, but that is the only thing that can be said against it.)

To the best of my recollection it happened during the first winter of the 1914-18 war. At that time my father was still Chancellor of the Exchequer, but we had taken a house at Walton Heath which my mother preferred to No. 11. On the night in question my father had to go up to Town to be present at some big gathering at the Guildhall. The occasion was sufficiently important to make it necessary for him to attend in his uniform as a Member of the Privy Council. So into the knee-breeches and long stockings and silver-buckled pumps he had to get. After an early snack, prior to his leaving the house, he draped himself in the long, voluminous cloak that completed his costume. Thus attired he bade us *au revoir*, and left us. I can remember distinctly what a comic figure he cut in my eyes as he carefully tucked the heavy folds of the flowing cloak under his arm and made his way to the waiting motor-car in the drive.

The speeches over, he started homeward—armed only with his silver-hilted sword. Now even our Napier was not equipped with an electric-light system in those far-off days. The headlights were of the then prevailing acetylene type. It was a moonless, pitch-dark night, visibility nil. Somewhere along the way from Town those lights went out! Mostyn, our Welsh chauffeur, brought the car to a stop, and got out to try to discover the cause of the trouble.

After a moment or two—sitting alone on the back seat in all the glory of his robes, and being for ever impatient—my father decided to get out and stretch his legs and probably attend to other matters. Although in that Stygian blackness he could not see the chauffeur, he could hear him tinkering with the machinery under the lifted bonnet.

Suddenly the headlights came on full force. The chauffeur jumped into the car and started the engine. Before my father, behind the car and some distance from it, could find his voice, off it rolled.

So it was, when Mostyn pulled up at the entrance to our home at Walton Heath and jumped down and opened the car door, standing smartly at attention—nothing happened. Nobody alighted, because there was nobody inside. Terrified, convinced his master had been kidnapped by German agents, Mostyn had

sense enough to get back behind the wheel and start at top speed back along the way he had come. And finally, far off in the desolate countryside, his headlights picked up a dejected figure, trudging along the highway, the red-lined cloak hung over his arm!

*That* story remained for years the surest laugh-provoker in all my mother's extensive repertoire.

It was a good enough story, but to my mother's lively imagination it had to have a happy ending, so this is her version. The stoppage actually took place on Banstead Downs, a desolate heath bearing no edifice of any description except the grim and extensive L.C.C. lunatic asylum. My poor father was trudging along past the gloomy portals, in his befeathered fore-and-aft hat, and clutching his Georgian sword, when out of the murky shadows steps a policeman:

"Oi!, just a minute, *just* a minute, where do you think you're going at this time of night in that get-up?" My father, tired, but with quiet dignity: "I am the Chancellor of the Exchequer." The policeman, gently and sympathetically taking his arm, "Oh, you are, are you? Well, come in here and have a nice cup of tea and a quiet chat with the Archbishop of Canterbury!"

## CHAPTER XIII

*Tri chynnalïaeth awen;  
llwyddïant; cydnabyddïaeth;  
a charmoliaeth.*

Nurture from three things genius  
draws:  
Fortune, acquaintance, and applause.

EVENTFUL as life for my mother was during our stay in Downing Street, and although the death of her parents had left her with less excuse than ever for leaving London in favour of Criccieth, she continued to pay visits to her birthplace at every possible opportunity. During the actual building operations the new Brynawelon afforded a first-class excuse. After all, as she pointed out to my father, the family must have a home apart from temporary Governmental housing. And since she had seen to it that Criccieth was the birthplace of each of her five children, where else could the permanent home be so appropriately established?

It was during these visits after her parents' death that a great and abiding friendship was cemented between my mother and Uncle Lloyd. As self-appointed head clerk of the law business he was in a position to report how things were going—information which in due course she transmitted to my father on her return to London. How much her great admiration of and respect for the acumen of the quondam shoemaker had to do with it I cannot say, but it is a fact that my father had boundless faith in the soundness of his uncle's judgment. I know of my own knowledge many occasions when he sought—and followed—Uncle Lloyd's advice.

One of the few times when he refused to heed this advice—at the same time ignoring the advice of scores of well-wishers even better versed in the game of politics—was when Asquith asked him to give up his post as Chancellor of the Exchequer in order to take up the duties of the Minister of Munitions, the formation of which Ministry my father had insisted upon. On the face of it Uncle Lloyd and these other advisers were right. The change was definitely a demotion. Worse, it was a thankless task that he must undertake—remedying existing faults that up to then had accounted for the shocking shell shortage at the front in France. At best, if he succeeded, little credit would accrue to him, for the

critics were certain to use such success as proof of the appalling inefficiency of the War Office. If he failed, he would be mercilessly excoriated by these same critics. So it looked as if he were in for a bad time whatever happened!

My mother was not in the ranks of his many advisers. Perhaps if she had sided with Uncle Lloyd and added her entreaty to his, my father might not have consented to take the difficult post. But in steering clear of the whole subject my mother was merely adhering to a lifelong policy of non-interference. My father's career, as she saw it, was his—and his only. The only times I ever knew of her so much as expressing an opinion that might have influenced him in his political activities was now and again when she came out with the flat-footed assertion that So-and-so was not to be trusted. She confined her expression of opinions to matters on which she could speak as an authority. And no one better than my father knew that as a judge of character my mother possessed something akin to genius. Seldom indeed did he fail to be guided by her opinion as regards any given individual, and when he did he invariably regretted it!

Queen Mary was indirectly responsible for my mother's refusal to join in the prayers of those who were beseeching my father not to make the fatal error of attempting the impossible. It was Her Majesty who, early in the war, told my mother what she was doing in the way of providing comforts for the fighting men in the trenches in Northern France. Of course, my mother immediately thought of the tens of thousands of Welsh lads fighting for King and Country, and on the spot made up her mind that they must be as well provided for as any of the other units. (Actually this happened some time before Asquith asked my father to switch jobs.)

First of all my mother persuaded my father to let her have three connecting rooms in No. 11 as her headquarters. In no time these rooms were crowded with Welsh women resident in London, all only too eager to do whatever work was assigned to them. Speedily this work developed into a sorting and packing routine, the response to my mother's appeals bringing in mountainous masses of every imaginable kind of comforts for the troops. Besides knitted wear and goods of all descriptions, every post brought cheques from wealthy Welshmen in all parts of the world. And with passing time the influx of gifts of money and goods

steadily increased until my mother was nearly overwhelmed with the magnitude of her task. In the circumstances, then, it is small wonder that she did not join in the circle of those who pleaded with my father not to jeopardize his political career.

From what she herself told me I am inclined to believe my father did not even discuss the proffered appointment with her. For, according to her story, he strode into the workrooms one day, and called her aside.

"Maggie," he said, "I've got to have these three rooms."

"Very well," said my mother, "they are yours. What do you want them for?"

"I've just been appointed Minister of Munitions," he said, "and I've got to have some place to work in."

And that was that—as briefly as that. Three sentences between them wiped out of existence the headquarters of her beloved Comforts Fund for the Welsh troops. But, as it happened, this was not quite all. *Within a week* the Ministry of Munitions had taken over the whole of the Government-commandeered Metropole with its several hundred rooms! So my mother's threatened summary eviction was short-lived, and well she knew it would be!

In this connection it seems pertinent to include here another story which my mother used to enjoy telling, not only to us children but to close friends in Criccieth, who, of course, were watching from afar but with keen interest the activities of their M.P. in London. I admit it has to do with politics, but to the best of my knowledge it has never before been told in print. In any event, it ranks high in the list of my mother's choicest tales.

It began with my father's sending for big manufacturers in all parts of the Kingdom to come to London for a conference. When they were assembled he told them it mattered not at all to him what their regular line of work was; from that day forward, until the war was won, they were all munition-makers! He ordered them to return to their respective plants and there draw up a skeleton survey of their maximum production capacity, and the class of armament they could turn out. To do this he gave them one week, at the end of which they were all to return to London with the required detailed information.

At the time appointed they reappeared. One glance at their

reports, plus a moment or two of simple addition, showed my father that among them these manufacturers could produce a far greater supply of munitions than the most rabid critics of the War Office would have dreamed possible. The total was truly staggering, but it did not stagger my father. He told them all to go back and get busy making good their estimates.

Then, having started the ball rolling, he tackled the hardly less formidable task of arranging to pay for the astronomical bill in coin of the realm. And here he came upon what looked like a first-class impasse. Asquith told him plainly that he had bitten off far too much for the British taxpayer to chew! These estimates must be scaled down to a total sum that could be met by the Treasury. The best way to go about it was to have a Treasury Committee inquire into the matter, and come to some *reasonable* modification of the scheme. And there, for the time being, the matter was left.

Eventually this Treasury Committee completed its deliberations, and sent for my father to acquaint him with their findings. Accompanied by his secretary, John T. Davies, my father appeared before the Committee. The chairman of this body, the new Chancellor, Reginald McKenna, afterwards, very appropriately, chairman of the Midland Bank, then explained at great length why the whole scheme was impractical and why the Treasury could not possibly finance it. When he finished, and glanced at my father by way of suggesting he was ready to hear what he might have to say by way of protest, that Committee got the surprise of its Red Tape and short life.

"Humph!"

That exclamation was all my father had to say. A moment later he and his secretary were outside the building, walking back to the Metropôle. Of course, John T. Davies was disconsolate. Never had he seen his chief so utterly defeated. He wanted to express his sympathy, but something about my father's cocky bearing as he strode along made the words die unspoken. But finally, as they reached the entrance to the Metropôle, J. T. could keep silent no longer.

"Well, Chief," he said, "there is the end of all our hopes and dreams!"

My father stopped abruptly and eyed the other with an impish grin.



"It's the end of that bloody Committee," he said.

And if this were not literally true, it was true in effect. By that time every one of those manufacturers had effected the necessary change-over in their plants, and were already in production! The sadly needed munitions were being made, and obviously the Treasury *had* to find the money with which to pay for them.

Oh, I know how unethical expediency is. I know how honourable men deplore the wickedness of those who excuse their misconduct by trying to argue that the end justifies the means. I can understand the disapproval of those who live in a world of blacks and whites, for whom there are no pastel shades of right and wrong. Such people will not only condemn my father for thus wrongfully compelling the Treasury to meet bills which had never been officially authorized, they will count it hardly less sinful for my mother to tell the story to her children as a priceless bit of high comedy.

To justify my father's behaviour on that occasion, to excuse my mother for making us laugh over it, I would not think of attempting. Like my parents, I *know* the world is a world of pastel shades.

And now, with zest and relish, I come to one of the happiest episodes of my youth—and of my parents' life.

The exact year escapes me, 1910 I think, but I know it was early in our stay at No. 11 that my father came home one evening with the great news. His Majesty the King had asked him to turn school teacher for a bit—his pupil to be H.R.H. Prince Edward, the subject Welsh.

(And before I try to tell the story, I find it timely to interpolate the interesting fact that among the earliest of the thousands of condolences my father received after my mother's death was a cablegram from the Duke of Windsor.)

To us youngsters who had had to learn English, it seemed too good to be true that an English boy, more or less of our own age, must learn to speak *our* native tongue.

At that time my father had become Constable of Caernarvon Castle, a post which he still holds. It was at Caernarvon Castle that the first Prince of Wales, Edward I's eldest son, was presented to the Welsh people. The story goes that the wily



CAERNARVON CASTLE



Edward promised the turbulent chieftains a Welsh-born prince who could not speak a word of English. He was born in the castle, and of course could not speak any language when presented to the people. My father prayed the King to revive the Investiture and Presentation. This official position of my father's entailed his being in charge of the impressive ceremony, but I have always believed this influenced King George and Queen Mary less than the fact that besides being under the tutelage of my father their eldest son would also come under the kindly care of my mother. At any rate, I have always fixed the beginning of the great friendship between Her Majesty and my mother at about this time.

For several months, two or three evenings each week, the youthful heir to the throne would come to No. 11 for his coaching. From the time he entered the house until he left it he heard very little English spoken. (There was nothing unusual about this, Welsh being the only language ever used by any of us when we were *en famille*.) But it must have been a trying experience for the youngster—at least for the first few sessions. As I have already said, there was a definite streak of the thespian in my father in those days. He enjoyed nothing better than to set the stage for a theatrical effect, and the coming of his distinguished pupil afforded an unparalleled opportunity that he was not slow to grasp.

The Prince, haltingly at first, but ever improving, enunciated his Welsh sentences with a very clear boyish voice—he was only fifteen at the time.

As those evenings continued over a period of several months we all came to know our scholar, and to like him tremendously. That affection, so far as I am concerned, was complemented by a great admiration for the young man. I know my mother's admiration of him matched mine, and certainly he held an especially warm corner in her capacious heart. Further, I can speak for her as well as for myself when I say that nothing that subsequently transpired lessened our admiration and affection by an iota.

Frankly, he was not a brilliant scholar, but failure to be an adept in a certain subject proves nothing. F. E. Smith (who died Lord Birkenhead) was at the same time one of the world's most brilliant minds and the world's worst auction-bridge player. Winston Churchill is one of the great masters of the English

language, profane and sacred, but, except on one memorable occasion, I have never heard him fluent in any other. So if the Prince of Wales found Welsh difficult, and made progress in the language less rapidly than my father thought he should, that is not to say he was slow-witted in other directions. Actually I expect he was no slower at learning my native language than I was when I had to master the English tongue.

In any event, I like to think (and this is not a case of wishful thinking) that the youth who, many years later as King Edward VIII, was destined to make a tour of South Wales and promise the hard-driven coal-miners and unemployed a square deal, learned much more than a smattering of the Welsh language from these evenings in our house.

It was, of course, an accident (if one is disinclined to call it fate) that England had a Welshman as Prime Minister during the early years of this especial Prince of Wales's heirdom. Not since the days of Henry VII had the fact of Wales's existence been so continuously and so emphatically kept in the forefront of affairs in Westminster. So it was only natural that for the first time in more than five centuries—since Owen Glendower was acclaimed The Man of Wales—the hereditary title took on real significance. At last the accent was on *Wales*! For this I give my mother as much credit as I give my father. The youthful Prince of Wales—indeed, anyone—would have had to have a heart of stone not to have learned to love the land of my birth as my mother sang its praises.

The ceremony took place on July 13, 1911, in the old castle. All Wales seemed to be there in all garbs, naval, military, bardic and civilian. It was King's weather, not a cloud in the sky, not a ripple on the Menai, and the magnificent old fortress came out in all her mediaeval glory. The Office of Works had sent down Frank Baines, an architect of genius, to prepare and put on the garb of State. That day will live as a tribute to his memory. All the Prince's regalia—circlet, sceptre, ring and orb—were of Welsh gold, from the mountains of Merionethshire. That was the keynote of the whole ceremony—it was Wales acclaiming her Prince. Then the King led his eldest son to Queen Eleanor's gate and presented him to the people, assembled in their thousands. Their Prince spoke to them in their own tongue, clearly and courageously. He was sixteen and his nerves were kept in control

by his pluck. That day may have decided him never to face a coronation.

From royalty to grease.

The latter is what begrimed me from morning to night during this period. As an essential part of my training as a civil engineer I was working on a construction job at Tilbury on the Thames. In the slime and ooze of the river I did my eight hours' work each day. At the end of it I was a sight, of course. Also, of course, I did not go to work in morning clothes and a top-hat; my sartorial gear was in keeping with my job. So, coming home in the Underground, City magnates and typists alike showed an equal degree of disinclination to sit next to me. Not to put too fine a point on it, I was filthy.

Picture me, then, crossing Parliament Square from the Westminster station of the Underground one evening on my way along Whitehall to Downing Street. The day's work had been unusually exhausting, and I was dead tired, so much so as not to note the surprising lack of traffic in the customarily busy thoroughfare. It was not until I had almost reached the turning into Downing Street that I saw to my astonishment a line of police constables completely filling the roadway ahead of me. At the same moment I saw that the whole of Whitehall all the way to Trafalgar Square had been cleared of traffic. What it was all about I had no idea. My only thought was to get home and into a hot bath.

But when I tried to squeeze past two of the bobbies they brought me to a halt.

"Where do you think you're going, mate?" said one.

"Home," said I.

"And where might that be?" said he.

"I'm Richard Lloyd George," I said. "I live at No. 11."

"And I'm Mary Pickford," said the constable, "—go on—'op it!"

Of course, the "mate" should have told me in the first place that he took me to be a navvy. And I could see how hopeless it was to try to convince him I was in fact the son of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. So, there being no such things as Identity Cards in those days, I turned away, and started trudging back towards Parliament Square. How I was to get home I had no notion. A vague idea of telephoning and having someone at No. 11 come

out and vouch for me was forming in my mind when suddenly I had an inspiration. One of the police sergeants regularly on duty in the inner courtyard of the Foreign Office was a pal of mine. If I could get to him he would see me through the police cordon.

So I turned in to the road at the far end of the Foreign Office and presently saw to my delight that my pal was in his accustomed place. Escorted by him I was quickly through the police lines, and a moment later was telling my mother what had happened. Of course, she thought it was a grand joke, deserving of inclusion in her repertoire of family comicalities.

The reason for the police cordons and the diversion of traffic from Whitehall was not laughable. The Suffragettes had been on the warpath again.

This is how we lived in those days of amazing contrasts. I was working with the Port of London Authority at a wage of £2 per week, so when my father brought out his Insurance Act in 1911 I had to get a card from the Post Office along with the rest of my mates. We all trooped down to the local post office at Tilbury, and they, seeing the joke coming, put me at the end of the queue. The conversation when my turn came to face the young lady was as follows:

"Christian Name?"

"Richard."

"Surname?"

"Lloyd George." Whereupon she looked up inquiringly and then proceeded:

"Address?"

"No. 11 Downing Street." Whereupon she gave a saucy giggle and a coy look and said, "Oh, stop your kidding!"

About that time the French President came over to London and was fêted at the Palace, my father and mother being commanded to attend the State banquet. On these occasions the famous gold plate is brought up from Windsor Castle, where it is always kept under strict guard. Full uniforms and decorations have to be worn, and the sight is an amazing one. I was in Criccieth on holiday at the time, and I received postal instructions from my mother to construct a rock garden and a lily pond. This meant mixing concrete and generally getting myself into a mess. I put on a pair of overalls and was getting on with the job when a big charabanc loaded with Lancashire tourists arrived and stopped by

the gate of Brynawelon. One of their members was deputed to come and ask me if they could get inside and see the grounds. I said, "I'm afraid not—the family are at home," whereupon he walked back and said to his companions:

"No, it's no go, this workman says they're in residence."

My mother arrived next day more or less direct from the glories of Buckingham Palace, and the first I saw of her in the evening was when she was rigged up in the most amazing old costume, with a very dilapidated man's cap on her head, and an infinitesimal watering-can in her hand, going around watering her favourite seedlings. She had to walk about a hundred to a hundred and fifty yards to refill the midget can, but my offer to bring down one of two-gallon size and leave it adjacent was treated with a withering contempt. She knew best.

From about this time, as I have said above, I date the beginning of the friendship between Queen Mary and my mother, a friendship founded on mutual interests and respect. They both had a great love and knowledge of flowers. Queen Mary's garden in Regent's Park is one of the spots my mother used to delight to visit—and she knew when to go.

In point of fact, and to a far greater degree than even close friends of my parents realized, my mother was of great help to my father on many occasions. It serves my purpose to cite only one instance in support of this statement, and I prefer to let Lord Riddell tell it:

*From Lord Riddell's diary.*

"February 1st, 1913—Mrs. Lloyd George told me that the Queen had a long chat with her regarding the Insurance Act, in which she displayed much interest. Her Majesty's chief anxiety was that the maternity benefit should be made as advantageous as possible for poor mothers."

Can anyone doubt the effectiveness of my mother's repeating this conversation to my father? Could Her Majesty have found in all the Empire another woman who would have been more eager to ameliorate the condition in which poor mothers found themselves? I very much doubt it. Nor could she have found a wife who could better present Her Majesty's anxiety. For it was shared to the full by my mother, and she knew better than anyone else how to induce my father to see with her eyes.



## CHAPTER XIV

*Tri pheth a yrant wo o'i dy:  
cronglwyd ddyferllyd,  
sawell fyglyd,  
a gwraig geintachlyd.*

Three things will drive a man from home:  
A house which reeks,  
A roof which leaks,  
A wife who wrangles when she speaks.

TODAY being for ever yesterday's tomorrow and tomorrow's yesterday, chronology (as I have already mentioned) has never appealed to me. The happening has always seemed to me to be the important thing—the date of its happening of secondary or no importance. The man in the street will say, for instance, the war to end war began on August 4, 1914. And no one will dispute the fact that this was the date of Britain's declaration of war on Germany. But for my mother this date held no significance. As the wife of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and as the good friend of such men as Winston Churchill, F. E. Smith and Lord Riddell (to name only a small number of the public leaders of the time who confided in her), she had known for days before the actual event its inevitability. She knew that my father, even as late in the day as July 31, was doing everything humanly possible to stave off the terrible thing. She knew big business men and bankers were begging him to prevent the Government's moving against Germany. She knew Lord Cunliffe, Governor of the Bank of England, had told my father we should all be ruined if we were dragged into a European war. She could understand the depths of emotion that moved such men to tears as they pleaded with my father to keep us out of it.

Like all mothers of sons, she hated war, of course. Gwilym and I would be in it necessarily. One-half of her brood, now that dear little Mair was no longer with us, must be exposed to the danger of sudden death. The anxiety she suffered can never be faintly imagined by a mere male. But she kept her fears to herself. Only once in those four-and-a-half years did she give voice to so much as a hint of her agony of mind. And that one exception, thank God, was followed by relief.

It may sound stupid that my father's receiving word of Gwilym's

coming home from France on leave unexpectedly should have upset my mother to such an extent. But the fact is it did. Dry-eyed and quiet-spoken she said simply, "Dick's been killed, they're sending Gwilym home to break the news."

Picture her joy when Gwilym was able to tell her that I was alive and kicking when he last saw me. Gwilym never knew her to laugh so long, to come closer to having hysterics. For once he was baffled by this immoderate exhibition of her sense of humour. For his part, he could see nothing whatever funny about the show in France. The mud and the rats and the stench were not at all comical. But, of course, my mother knew nothing about any of that. And it was good to hear this unrestrained, infectious laughter. (Not until long years after was he to discover it was in fact sheer hysterics—born of her immense relief in knowing her other son was safe.)

Normal laughter being so much the order of the day wherever my mother was, it seems to me this unusual incident is worth recording as another instance of her great courage. Having allowed fear to grip her heart, she purged herself of the unworthy weakness by those paroxysms of laughter.

Many years later, in June 1929, my father brought home another gem of comedy which my mother loved to tell. He had delivered a speech at the ninety-first Anniversary of the Printers' Pension Fund, over which Lord Riddell presided, and as soon as he had finished he left hurriedly to go to another appointment. Unable to find Dyer with the car, my father started to walk to another entrance to the Hall. Of course, he was recognized, and in no time a big crowd was following him.

Not far off was the Dominion Theatre, where Charlie Chaplin was attending the first presentation in this country of his film "City Lights." I may have my date wrong, probably have, but I think that was the name of the film. Naturally there was a crowd outside the Dominion as well, probably bigger than the one for the ex-Prime Minister. Two little London urchins attached themselves to the wrong crowd, and chased after my father. As only little Cockneys can, they soon caught up on him, and the little girl took one look and then turned to her brother: "Garn! that ain't Charlie Chaplin, that's Lloyd George!" The little boy, not to be done out of *some* demonstration, yelled: "Good old Lloyd George!"

I have said my mother was not a good housekeeper, and, in the sense that I have explained, I hold to this opinion. But certainly no housekeeper ever had a more difficult *ménage* to run than my mother had. She never knew until the last minute how many dinner guests my father might bring with him, and during the last two years of the war, with restricted food supplies, this frequently presented difficult problems. For my mother I will say the love and loyalty which she inspired in her servants made *them* manage to cope with the situation, however tricky it might be.

I recall one occasion, during the summer of 1917, when my father himself was more than a little worried about having impulsively extended invitations to dinner to two men (without consulting my mother). He confided his anxiety to Lord Riddell as they walked about the garden in our Walton Heath home. It seemed he already had one house guest—Caradoc Rees, a Welsh M.P., a barrister—and was expecting General (later Field-Marshal) Sir Henry Wilson and Lord Milner to arrive. In the spring of 1917 things were going badly for the French. My father made no effort to conceal his worry over the situation, and talked about it at length. Then, abruptly, he added, "Anxious as I am about the military situation, I'm *terrified* by the thought of what Maggie will say when she discovers she has to provide for two more dinner guests."

At that moment my mother joined the two men in the garden. To rescue my father from his predicament, Lord Riddell casually suggested that he had plenty of food in his larder and could easily feed Messrs. Milner and Wilson. But my mother was not having that!

"We can manage, thank you very much," she said. "But it will mean that Dafydd will have to go short tomorrow."

And Dafydd did.

Most people, I suppose, know of or have heard about dogs or cats which seem to be gifted with a sixth sense enabling them to know their master is coming home, for instance, long before he is in sight. And between married couples there are innumerable examples of something which, for lack of a better explanation, is said to be mental telepathy. But to the best of my knowledge my mother was unique in that she could tell what was going on in my father's mind—*by his gait!* When, for instance, he was

worried by the way the war was going he paced about the garden at Walton Heath with a measured, heavy tread. When, however, he was lost in thought, working out the details of an important speech, he moved swiftly and with little dancing steps. More than once my mother astounded her guests by telling them her husband (who was too far away to have possibly communicated with her) was in the midst of preparing a speech—the astonishment coming when he drew near and corroborated my mother's statement.

As Prime Minister at No. 10 my father was every whit as much the simple, unaffected husband and father as our home life was unchanged. No one could give a more accurate picture of our way of living than Lord Riddell has written in his diary for April 5, 1917—the day before the United States declared war on Germany. The brief excerpt is so typical of our daily life at that time I feel it must be included here:

“Called at Downing Street . . . in came the P.M.—full of high spirits. He gave a humorous exhibition of the doings of a deputation he had seen in the afternoon, his imitation of the Scottish speakers most amusing. He is very proud of the expedient he has discovered for dealing with deputations. He sees two holding contrary or different views at the same time. ‘The poison and the antidote,’ as I said to him. ‘Yes,’ he replied, ‘a regular chemist's shop. Today the clerical Scots arrived. When they came they found the Scotch labour leaders and working men.’ L. G.'s imitations of a burly labour leader criticizing one of the Scotch employers was immense.

L. G. invited me to go upstairs to dinner. It was served in the great dining-room. So far as the food, service, and appointments were concerned, it looked as if a small suburban household were picnicking in Downing Street—the same simple food, the same little domestic servant, the same mixture of tea and dinner. And yet with all that an air of simple dignity and distinction pervaded the room—no affectation, no pretension, nothing mean, nothing ignoble. Mrs. L. G. is a quiet, dignified woman, and as brave as a lion. . . . The conversation turned on personal qualities. L. G. remarked, ‘I have one quality which I never get credit for. I am one of the most patient men in the world.’ The whole family agreed he was patient in big

things, but strongly protested that he was often impatient in small ones. To which he laughingly assented."

Of course, no one knew us all so well as Lord Riddell did, but even so this thumbnail sketch is amazingly true to life. (Naturally I am pleased to know he was in no doubt about my mother's courage!)

One of those debunking writers, to which ilk I earlier referred, has gone on record with the statement that Abraham Lincoln was a habitual user of blasphemous language. True or false, the mere making of such an irrelevant statement seems to me to prove the author's intent to make himself important. No such purpose animates me when I say both my father and my mother enjoyed what George Robey so aptly calls "honest vulgarity." Indeed, there were times when their joking took on a decided Rabelaisian tinge. And this *is* important because it mirrors a distinctively Welsh trait that dates back to pre-Roman days. The swearing vocabulary, in Welsh, apart from the customary calling on the Deity in various forms, is not extensive.

So, not for mere reiteration nor in any way to qualify what I have had to say about my mother's goodness, I set down here a little anecdote that sheds further light on our home life. It happened some time before my father became Prime Minister, while I was at home on leave from France. I remember my father had three of his secretaries at dinner with us. He had been working them more than usually hard all day. He was worried about what he called "defects" in the War Office, and for a time—until my mother's gaiety began to take effect—he was moody. But after dinner his high spirits reappeared. He suggested we all sing some of our favourite Welsh hymns. Following this we sang "Cockles and Mussels," "But—in spite of all temptations, to belong to other nations," and a dozen other old stand-bys, each one finding my father gayer than ever. Abruptly, and with a purposely overdone wink at my mother, he said that would be quite enough music for the time being; he would now tell us the very latest army story.

This one, he said, had to do with General Congreve and a carrier pigeon. When this pigeon came flying in to its home cote, the General insisted on personally removing the message attached to its leg. And this is what he read: "Look here, Bill, I'm fed up with looking after this bloody bird."

All of us roared with laughter, my mother as heartily as any of us. And why not? Only a few years later the second act "curtain line" of Shaw's *Pygmalion* was nightly sending audiences into paroxysms of laughter by the use of the same adjective.

This incident illustrates very well one of my father's many great qualities—his ability to throw off his worries. My mother used to repeat often that you did not improve any situation by worrying about it. He never took his worries to bed with him—nothing could upset his sleep. His power of willing sleep to come almost at any hour undoubtedly gave him reserves of strength which carried him through many a dark period, more particularly in the 1914-18 war. The lack of ability to throw off worry undoubtedly shortened the life of Bonar Law. He was a great colleague to my father during those fateful years 1917-18, but he certainly had a gift for looking on the dark side. I suppose, really, it made for good team-work, to have the buoyant, never-say-die Welshman and the cautious, reliable, but rather gloomy Scot-Canadian in tandem.

At an earlier date, in 1916, before my father became Secretary of State for War and while he was trying in vain to persuade Asquith to make Churchill his successor as Minister of Munitions, he was much worried by the situation in Southern Ireland. Again, co-incidentally, it was at just about this time that that grand old Irishman, T. P. O'Connor, took a house at Walton Heath for the summer. Tay Pay became a frequent visitor to our house. My mother liked him tremendously, and I am sure he worshipped her. I recall his telling her there was "a new Ireland" in the making and that he, old as he then was, would live to see the death of the Irish Party in the House. I fancy my mother was less interested in this prophecy than she was in the charm of the man himself. "The way he takes snuff—and spills it on his waistcoat," she once told me, "is like a glimpse into a long-dead age. It's fascinating to watch him." On several occasions my mother took Olwen and me to dine at Tay Pay's house, and we always had grand fun there.

On another point even such an intimate friend of the family as Lord Riddell was in error. Like most people, he made the mistake of looking upon my father as a teetotaler—which my father is *not*. My mother eschewed alcoholic beverages, but even she—once and once only—downed a large glass of ardent spirits,

to my father's huge delight! The fact that he fought "the Trade" up hill and down dale may have been the reason people assumed he never took a drink, and it is typical of him that he never troubled to set them straight.

I remember my mother's telling me of having Lord Riddell at dinner at No. 11 Downing Street when my father chaffed him for having cut his face while shaving. "'You really must avoid drink,' your father told him. At that Lord Riddell, with a wink in my direction, said he knew a teetotaller—meaning your father—who cut his face only last week. 'Quite true,' your father retorted, 'but you are not a member of a feeble and shaky Cabinet!'"

My mother had a theory about my father's hair which, sound or not, is interesting. She insisted she had only to look at his hair to know whether he was feeling fit or seedy. It is a fact, at any rate, that before his hair turned permanently white it did undergo most striking changes of colour. I know from what my mother told me that many people thought he dyed it. Actually, according to her, the better things were going and the higher his spirits rose, the less grey his hair became. As a young man, while he was reading for his "final"—the law examinations which he passed with honours—he overworked himself tremendously. His run-down condition became plain to my mother when she saw a small white patch in his brown hair. When he became fit again that patch gradually disappeared. Although I would not go so far as to call him a hypochondriac, my father was definitely inclined to be an "Imaginary Invalid." "In imagination," my mother once told me, "he has had almost every illness under the sun."

## CHAPTER XV

*Tri pheth a wna wraig yn  
anniwair:  
teguch yn ei gwymb;  
ffolineb yn ei phen;  
a balchedd yn ei chalon.*

Three things may make a woman  
naught:  
A giddy brain;  
A heart that's vain;  
A face in beauty's fashion wrought.

ATOMIC as the single anecdote admittedly is—if it were my purpose here to attempt to present a complete word-picture of the man—I still think a remark which Winston Churchill once made to my mother (which subsequently she told and retold with great glee) is as typically Churchillian as any of his better-known and more famous sayings. To appreciate the full flavour of the remark one must remember that even in London our home was redolent of the countryside. (Lord Riddell has described us as being like “a suburban” family “picnicking” in No. 10, but I say we were rather out-and-out country folk, of the earth earthy.)

Now if Churchill had addressed this remark to my father, instead of to my mother, its point would have been blunted. For my father was not born on a farm, nor was he a farmer's son. If, these days, much is written about his eminently successful agricultural undertaking at Churt, the fact remains that farming is not in his blood. My mother, on the other hand, was a daughter of a tiller of the soil, and in all the many years of her life she never forgot it.

Presumably Churchill merely intended to make polite conversation when he mentioned casually at dinner in our home that that day he had bought a little place in the country. Whatever my mother had to say by way of a rejoinder was undoubtedly said in the same spirit of inconsequential dinner chatter. But then, suddenly and with characteristic vehemence, her guest smote the dining-table with his clenched fist.

“And I'm going to make that farm pay,” he exclaimed, “whatever it costs!”

Only a practical farmer whose back-breaking labour enables him to make the land give him a living can appreciate fully the comicality of this approach to farm economics. But as my mother



used to tell the story of this special "gentleman farmer," it made even the most parochial Londoners laugh.

Much has been written about the "association" (to use Churchill's own word) between him and my father, but very little has ever been told in print of his great affection for my mother—an affection that was mutual. And although my mother did not subscribe to the nonsensical dictum, "Love me, love my dog," it certainly did not tend to lessen her fondness for the younger man when she found him praising my father in his public utterances. I fancy the first thing of this kind which endeared him to my mother is what appears in an early part of the first of the six volumes which Churchill wrote under the title, *The World Crisis*. Here it is:

"I date the beginning of . . . violent times in our country from the Jameson Raid in 1896. This was the herald, if not indeed the progenitor, of the South African War. From the South African War was born the Khaki Election, the Protectionist Movement, the Chinese Labour cry and the consequent furious reaction and Liberal triumph of 1906. From this sprang the violent inroads of the House of Lords upon popular government, which by the end of 1908 had reduced the immense Liberal majority to virtual impotence, from which condition they were rescued by the Lloyd George Budget in 1909. This measure became, in its turn, on both sides, the cause of still greater provocations, and its rejection by the Lords was a constitutional outrage and political blunder almost beyond compare."

Surely such championing of her husband would warm any good wife's heart.

Actually that association to which Churchill has frequently referred had its beginnings as far back as 1904, when he crossed the Floor of the House on the Free Trade issue. From then on he worked in close political association with my father, who—Churchill himself says—was "the first to welcome" him. So, since my father's political associates were almost without exception his personal friends as well, it is not surprising that Churchill became a frequent visitor in our home.

I have heard it said that my father was lukewarm about the growing menace of Germany in the period immediately preceding August 1914. This untruth undoubtedly grew out of his "pro-

Boer" reputation. But I know from what my mother told me (I was in South America during those pre-war years) that this was untrue. And I know how grateful she was to Churchill for putting the matter right—over his own signature. Again I quote from *The World Crisis*:

"For some weeks he [my father] offered no indication of what his line would be, and in our numerous conversations he gave me the impression of being sometimes on one side and sometimes on the other. But on the morning of July 21, when I visited him before the Cabinet, I found a different man. His mind was made up. He saw quite clearly the course to take. He knew what to do and how and when to do it. The tenor of his statement to me was that we were drifting into war. He dwelt on the oppressive silence of Germany so far as we were concerned. He pointed out that Germany was acting as if England did not count in the matter in any way; that she had completely ignored our strong representation; that she was proceeding to put the most severe pressure on France; that a catastrophe might ensue; and that if it was to be averted we must speak with great decision. And we must speak at once. . . . The accession of Mr. Lloyd George in foreign policy to the opposite wing of the Government was decisive. We were able immediately to pursue a firm and coherent policy."

My mother hated the thought of war—not only as the mother of two sons of military age, but also because of her peaceful upbringing. But she came to hate the Godless brutes who plunged the world into four and a half years of carnage more than she hated war itself. A barnyard illustration will make her attitude clear. At a time when I was operating a farm in Suffolk I remember going to Criccieth to spend a few days with my mother at Brynawelon. With her I went out to watch her feed her flock of thirty hens. A scrawnier, more miserable-looking lot of fowls I never expect to see. They were all on their last legs, far too old to lay, and fit only for the stewing-pot. I begged my mother to have the lot killed—although I very much doubted if a week of stewing would make their ancient carcases tender enough to eat.

"*Dic bach!*" protested my mother indignantly. "How can you be so cruel? They are fine layers, every one of them! I'll show

you!" And off she scurried across the lawn, poking under hedges and bushes (of course she would not think of keeping them penned up in a proper chicken-run), searching for proof of her decrepit birds' fecundity. When, finally, she had to admit the quest was fruitless she was not in the least less certain that her birds were prolific layers. She dismissed the subject with the patently absurd explanation that they must have strayed further away than usual and chosen a neighbouring field in which to deposit their eggs. That they were too old to be of any use was not their fault. This is what she would have said had I chosen to press the argument. That did not justify anyone's killing them.

But had I been able to convince her that one of those wretched fowls was suffering from a disease which would presently infect the whole flock she would not have hesitated a moment about having the afflicted hen killed. So with the Huns! Once she realized *they* were spreading the pestilence of war all over the world she was a whole-souled believer in destroying them.

Perhaps I am the only one (besides my father) who can understand how my mother's attitude towards killing—anyone or anything—insensibly influenced him in those summer days of 1914. But when they both awoke to a realization of the fact that only by killing Germans could the germ of war be eradicated from the world's masses they both knew the ghastly business had to be done. There was, most definitely, no element of pacifism about either of them.

In this connection it is not without interest to note that Count Metternich, then and for ten years previously Austrian Ambassador to the Court of St. James's, was recalled by his Government. It is history that the Kaiser was furious with him. How could a man spend ten years in London and be so dense as not to know how a powerful British Minister would react in any given situation? Supporting my personal opinion that my father's taking the bit in his teeth corresponded with my mother's opening her eyes to the truth, Churchill has this to say:

"... It will be seen from what has been written that this view [the Kaiser's] was hard on Count Metternich. How could he know what Mr. Lloyd George was going to do? Until a few hours before, his colleagues did not know. Working with him

in close association I did not know. No one knew. Until his mind was definitely made up, he did not know himself."

Inasmuch as I have several times, earlier in these pages, made the statement that my mother did not seek to influence my father in political affairs, I do not wish to have anyone infer that it was my mother who made my father make up his mind. I prefer what I believe to be the simple, understandable truth. I see the mother and father of two young men discussing the dread possibility of war. If they did not talk it over they would have been indeed strange parents. And I can see them both—at *first*—not lukewarm, but actively opposed to the thought of war. Then, as their vision became clear, I see them *agreeing* that at any cost the German beast must be caged. The operative word is *agreeing*.

Just as Richard Owen, prosperous tenant farmer, took no interest in policies which the Radical Liberals of his day were striving to put into effect, so my mother was not deeply concerned about any of my father's political manœuvrings. It was only when her sons' lives were involved that she became intensely interested. I like to believe that the great reluctance my father frequently showed when new and urgent demands for a more vigorous British offensive were urged upon him was due primarily to the added anxiety such heightening of British casualties would bring to my mother. At any rate, I have Churchill's word for it that my father gave his consent to such offensives only with the greatest reluctance.

But enough of such sombre things! So let me here tell a secret which my mother thought was very funny. To the best of my knowledge it *is* a secret, known in its entirety only to my father and ourselves. The fact is that during the period from 1910 to 1920 my mother declined at least ten invitations to enter Parliament! Oddly enough, these invitations were *not* extended to her by her own countrymen. (They knew her too well to be so silly.)

In other directions, however, she was exceptionally public-spirited. One of her pet organizations was the Ladies' Lifeboat Guild of South Caernarvonshire, of which she was an active member for many years. In recognition of her energetic work the National Lifeboat Institution gave her a gold badge. But without doubt the greatest good she accomplished—in a material sense—was the fruit of her prodigious labours during the 1914-18

war: In direct money gifts she collected more than £200,000 for the comfort of the Welsh troops and their dependants. She not only wheedled this large sum out of well-filled pockets, she saw to it that it was distributed where it was most needed, an even more difficult and intricate task.

Raising money for charitable causes kept her busy a major part of the time, nor did she regard her duty done when she had got the money. Its equitable and most beneficent distribution appealed to her as being quite as important as raising the cash. It cost her a minimum of effort, for instance, to collect the £10,000 required for building Criccieth's Memorial Hall. The real hard work followed. For the avowed purpose of the originators of the scheme was to make it the centre of Criccieth's social life. To make sure that the building would in fact serve this purpose entailed long and patience-trying discussions. In the end, all of my mother's ideas were adopted, and today the Memorial Hall in Criccieth is in fact what its planners wanted it to be. On its roomy stage famous Welsh singers and instrumentalists charm capacity audiences, lovers of good music. The next night sees the spacious floor cleared, the stage occupied by a big dance band, the girls of the community in their best bib and tucker partnering airmen and soldiers and sailors stationed round about Criccieth. Here, too, is the town's one cinema, the wartime projectionist a telegraphist in the Post Office whose duties prevent his being able to do more than give one show a day, five days in the week. Here also is a billiard-room, its one table always busy. And always it is a cheery place.

This was what my mother meant it to be. Now when I go home and hear the sound of happy laughter of the young folk inside that architecturally unimpressive building I like to fancy my mother is also listening, her heart made glad by the sound.

And now we are back in Criccieth this seems a fitting place to repeat a well-loved tale my mother regaled many distinguished hearers with—a tale that might well be titled “How To Hoodwink Your Husband.” It was while my father was Prime Minister, and shortly after the Geneva Conference, that he travelled down to Criccieth to dig potatoes and rest. The inevitable little army of detectives, newspapermen and news photographers followed him. The Black-and-Tans had been busy in Southern Ireland, violence answered with violence, and the situation definitely ugly. Those responsible for my father's safety

took elaborate precautions to safeguard him during the journey and while he was in Criccieth. Amongst other things, no one was allowed to know his daily movements—not even the reporters.

Now one of the photographers was an uncommonly enterprising youngster who thrived on difficulties. But this time it looked as if even he would have to return to his Fleet Street office empty-handed. For one whole week he tried in vain to get a glimpse of my father, and I can quite understand his beginning to feel the disgrace acutely. But he was by no means at the end of his tether. To admit defeat was not in his scheme of things. Guile was his in abundance, artful ruses part of his stock-in-trade. Having failed as a lurking, hidden watcher, he decided to try a different method.

Striding boldly up the driveway he rang the front-door bell at Brynawelon, and asked the maid to see if my mother would spare him a moment or two. (He could not possibly have known it, but it is a fact my mother never turned away anybody from her door; refusal to see anyone who asked to see her was unthinkable, so far as she was concerned.) So presently she was listening to a tale sad enough to bring tears to the eyes of a graven image. The photographer, according to the lugubrious tale he poured into my mother's sympathetic ears, had a wife and five tiny children. All of them would be in the gutter by the week-end if he failed to get at least one picture of the Prime Minister *that very day*.

Need I say that my mother, thus appealed to, became his accomplice on the instant? Bidding him stay where he was, she hurried to the library, from which, a moment later, she reappeared with a large-scale map. On this she pointed to a lonely spot in the sandhills where my father and his party, including Lord Riddell, were to picnic that day.

When the photographer, his camera looking suspiciously like a machine-gun, suddenly appeared on the skyline above the hollow in the sandhills where the party was having luncheon there was momentary alarm, as can be easily understood. Only one of the picnickers was as unperturbable as always, and for once I can give my mother no credit for this refusal to be scared. She, of course, knew there was no danger. Unobserved by the others, she flashed a friendly smile to the distant cameraman.

Thus the photographer—as confirmed a bachelor as he is (for professional purposes only) an adept romancer—got one of the best open-air “shots” of my father I have ever seen.

Incidentally, when my mother was sure he and his wife and children would *not* find themselves in the gutter she told my father and the others what she had done.

My mother made a discovery about Wales which, so far as I know, has never been told in print before. I fancy it followed from the great interest she took in the magnificent ring career of the one and only Jimmy Wilde. At any rate, she pointed out to me that almost every Welsh boxer who ever won distinction in the noble art hailed from Glamorgan. Similarly, Pembrokeshire (now my brother's constituency) has been the birthplace of almost every one of the Welsh jockeys whose records of winning mounts have made them rate high in turf annals. Gordon Richards and his brother Cliff, though Welsh, were, I believe, born on the English border. My mother did not say so in so many words, but I gathered the impression that she believed the mothers in those localities prayed that their male offspring might develop respectively into champion prize-fighters or champion jockeys. The only comparable instance within my knowledge of a single community's having a monopoly in the matter of specialized champions is Deer Island off the coast of Maine. Here, it is said, young wives live to give birth to sons who will eventually win the right to be in the crew manning a Yacht Cup Defender (the "Cup" being the far-famed America's Cup, to capture which British yachtsmen have been trying vainly for nearly a century.)

My mother was extraordinarily shrewd in her investments; a "lone wolf," she would prepare her list of shares and stocks, generally on the back of an old envelope which had brought a seedsman's catalogue, and proceed down the hill to her bank in Criccieth. When closeted with the Manager she would produce her list and give her instructions. I have been with her many a time and I have seen the poor man look askance at some of the proposed "buys" and mildly remonstrate. But no—the deal was done, and very rarely was her judgment wrong. One of the "Big Five" had no branch in Criccieth. This was monstrous. So she chose the site, ascertained the price, and bearded the lion in his den in the Head Office in London. So now Barclays have a very good branch on a corner site in Criccieth High Street.

## CHAPTER XVI

*Meddygon cleuon i'm  
clwyf ni cheisaf.*

When sickness comes, and doctors tend me,  
From busy doctors heaven defend me.

OUTSTANDING as were the many instances of physical courage which my mother proved she possessed to a remarkable degree, I have always thought the way she behaved when she broke her arm was the most outstanding. Once again I would not even attempt to fix the date of the accident, but it must have been during the other war, for it was in the era of hand-starters for motor-cars.

With Olwen at the wheel my mother was on her way to open a charity bazaar in Hampstead. Half-way something went wrong with the engine and the car came to a stop. When Olwen had finished doing all she knew how to do to the various gadgets under the bonnet—and still could not make the wonky motor come to life—my mother decided it was up to her to put matters right. Although she knew nothing about a car, or anything mechanical for that matter, she did know from observation that the one way to make the engine “turn over” was to “wind it up” with the crank-handle. So, with Olwen in the driver’s seat with her foot on the accelerator and her hand on the choke, my mother took up her place in front of the radiator and took a firm grip on the hand-starter.

The engine back-fired as my mother “wound it up”—and the next instant came the crack of a broken bone as the crank-handle dealt her a crashing blow. Of course, Olwen was almost overcome with alarm, but my mother was quite calm. Disguising the pain as well as she could, she got back into the car and directed Olwen to drive to the home of a doctor in the neighbourhood whom, fortunately, she knew. (In spite of the back-fire the engine was running.) So off they went again, and presently the fracture had been set, and my mother’s arm put in splints. Naturally the physician and Olwen took it for granted my mother would call off her engagement and go home to bed. But my mother was having none of that. She insisted on going on to the bazaar.

And she presided at the opening ceremonies, delivering her gracious little address quite as if nothing had happened to her!



With her one good arm she held the inevitable gift bouquet of flowers and brought them home with her.

How many women could duplicate that performance? I wonder.

Walter H. Page, the United States Ambassador to the Court of St. James's, took up his duties in May 1913. I was abroad at the time, but my mother met him frequently and liked him. As Page quickly discovered, England was at that time in the midst of what he wrote President Wilson was only a step short of a "revolution." On every hand—in conversations, in the newspapers, in Parliament—the ideas that were uppermost in the people's mind were democracy, Home Rule and the transformation of the political and social structure in the interest of the masses, causes that were all closest to this American's heart.

It was as if, by the oddest of coincidences, the coming of this most American of Americans synchronized with Britain's adopting the American conception of what was best for the greatest number. The interesting thing about this seems to me to be that Page considered my father to be chiefly responsible for embodying these ideas in action. He also went on to record (in a letter to his President) that my father had "drawn more inspiration from the Statesmen of America than any man who had risen to great position in British public life." Page believed a crisis was at hand which, in its effect on popular government, would prove comparable with the Revolution of 1688, the Puritan rebellion in Cromwell's time, and Magna Charta. At long last the era of "The Forgotten Man" was dawning—and he saw my father as its prophet.

Holding these views, it is not surprising that he became a frequent visitor in our home, and made friends with my parents. I like to think, as the friendship ripened, he gradually realized that it was less the "inspiration" derived from a study of American statesmen that influenced my father than it was my mother's unflagging championing of the under-dog. A man as astute as Page's letters to President Wilson prove him to have been must have early on seen that democracy *with a little d* was the very essence of my mother's philosophy. In his many chats with her he must have discovered that she was not in the least interested in the European situation. What did interest her tremendously was the struggle then taking place between the old and the new,

the rich and the poor. She knew (and I see no reason to doubt her having told Page so) that my father was regarded by the Tories as a ferocious spectre. She also knew, and had no difficulty in convincing the American Ambassador, that he had the mass of British public opinion on his side. However much his impulsiveness laid him open to attack—and none better than my mother knew this—he had at least one constant quality that must appeal to every American: his determination to make Britain a happier land for the masses. In this connection see what Burton J. Hendrick in *The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page* has to say about my father's battling on behalf of the under-dog:

“ . . . Of the sincerity of this passion, for it was nothing less, no one who has followed this great political career can have the slightest question. A blazing indignation for the injustices heaped upon the poor; a sympathy for the misery and straitened daily routine of the workers; a determination to give every man a fair chance; a hatred of the artificialities that have caused, through the ages, such an infinity of bleak and wasted lives,—these were the convictions that have made Lloyd George such a sincere and effective man. In this, his great side, there was much in common between Page and the fiery Welshman. Many of the speeches in which the British statesman assailed the historic system remind one of the strictures which Page had so frequently laid upon conditions in his own Southern States. When Lloyd George announced that ‘the day of the cottage man has dawned’ he was merely expressing the main idea of Page’s speech on the ‘Forgotten Man.’ The ‘implacable warfare’ which, as the Chancellor said in presenting his famous Budget of 1909, he proposed to wage ‘on poverty and squalidness,’ was precisely the warfare in which Page had been engaged since boyhood. Even the language of picturesque and uncompromising violence which Lloyd George found essential for expressing his programme aroused the same rage in propertied circles as had Page’s fierce denunciations in the previously placid atmosphere of North Carolina and Virginia.”

So my father and Page were *en rapport*. But will anyone suggest that *in exactly the same way* my father and my mother saw eye to eye? Naturally, it makes any son proud and happy to have an outsider praise his sire’s sincerity. But this is not the

whole story. I think I have already made it clear that the one thing my mother despised more than anything else was insincerity. Certainly no one else knew my father as well as she did. For me there is no necessity to read another's tribute to my father's honesty of purpose. I *know* nothing less than absolute sincerity on his part could have inspired my mother's selfless devotion to him. So I, at any rate, read into such eulogies as this one just quoted a tribute to my mother. The same interpretation, in my opinion, can be made in respect of parts of a letter which Page wrote to President Wilson after my father became Prime Minister. It reads:

"... Of course, Lloyd George's enemies predict that he will not last six months. But they are his enemies. His friends and the public in general expect him to finish the war successfully, and (many think) pretty quickly. To me, the new Government seems to promise well—very well. There's a snap about it that the old Government lacked. Lloyd George is not a spent force, but one of the most energetic projectiles that I've ever watched or come in contact with. He said more in half an hour yesterday than Asquith ever told me in his life. . . . But what I sat down to write you was my belief that Lloyd George will keep the programme that he sketched to me as far as you are willing he should. He will be frank. He is most friendly. . . . He is very direct. He does not use circumlocution. He doesn't 'intimate': he says things straight out. 'Call me on the telephone any time you like,' was his parting word. This from the present ruler of the British Empire; for the Prime Minister is of course not only the Chief Executive but the chief and leader also of the House of Commons. I am sure he is quite sincere."

Actually at that time my mother had never been far afield—a few trips to various European countries, but certainly never to Canada or the United States. She went with my father across the Atlantic in 1923 just after he had resigned his Premiership. He was a very tired man—seventeen years in office, four of those being stern years of war, with the British Empire struggling for its very existence. George V and my father—as did Queen Mary and my mother—during those fateful years formed a deep attachment for one another. Not one of them ever faltered during the

darkest hours. And now in the '40's we have another of the same stout build. Fortunate Isle! we seem in some miraculous way to produce our Drakes and Nelsons, our Cromwells and Churchills, just when we need them.

Calvin Coolidge was President when my father and mother were over, and they met him and a host of old friends at the White House. They travelled extensively over the States and Canada; and although my father's programme was tremendous, the invigorating atmosphere and the general keen thirst for knowledge acted as a tonic to them both.

My mother's immunity from sea-sickness was little short of amazing. In the first place, there was not, to the best of my knowledge, one seafarer amongst her ancestors on either side. Nor was it as if she had sailed the seas as a girl. Actually she was a grown woman with five children before she ever made a deep-water trip. She had had, of course, experience in fishing-smacks on the relatively placid waters of Criccieth Bay, but this surely could not have accounted for her being such a good sailor. In a way, her ability to weather the roughest storm, obviously enjoying the ship's tossing and pitching and rolling, filled her sympathetic heart with a tinge of regret. For, second only to the spectacle of a fat man's slipping on a banana skin, some perversity in us makes *mal de mer* (in the eyes of the other fellow) howlingly funny. And my mother, keen as her sense of humour was, knew she ought not to laugh over another's misery, however comical the woe-begone sufferer might be.

This did not prevent her telling (long afterwards) of one such incident. It took place in the Bay of Biscay, notoriously the unhappiest stretch of turbulent waters on the face of the globe. My mother was one of an (originally) merry party of holiday-makers *en route* to Lisbon. When the ship began the long crossing of the Bay of Biscay a terrific gale sprang up; the seas were mountainous. So, after her fellow-passengers had spent a night of horror, it is hardly surprising that she had the dining saloon to herself when breakfast-time arrived.

As always, the sea air had sharpened her appetite. Much to the bewilderment of the steward, himself a bit pea-green around the gills, my mother ordered a gargantuan meal. And as he staggered off to fill the order another passenger entered the saloon and took his place opposite my mother. The newcomer was

George Cave—afterwards Lord Cave, Lord High Chancellor of England. He prided himself on being a hardened sea-dog, prepared to snap his fingers at Old Man Neptune, however rough he might cut up. And by way of proving this he did his best to be jaunty as he bade my mother good-morning, adding a casual reference to the “fresh breeze.”

His jauntiness vanished when he saw the plate of porridge which the steward presently placed before my mother. He toyed with the menu with the pained expression of a man with a grievance, finally choosing as the solitary item of the meal—an apple. Meantime, my mother, having gaily disposed of the generous helping of porridge, was attacking the second course—bacon and eggs—with undiminished gusto. Her companion watched her with gradually growing disapproval, the while he slowly revolved the apple between his fingers without attempting to eat it. When he saw my mother finish clearing her plate and start on the pile of griddle cakes and marmalade (the steward by now beginning to revive and enter into the spirit of the thing) now set before her, he made no effort to conceal his horror. Swallowing hard and wetting his lips with his tongue, an agonized expression on his face, he managed to get to his feet.

“With your permission, Mrs. Lloyd George,” he said, “I think I’ll eat my apple on deck.” And with this he strode swiftly and unsteadily out of the saloon.

We did, however, eventually arrive in the Tagus, and in those days you had to go ashore in a rowing-boat from the gangway. My mother was first down, and as the small boat was rising and falling with the swell she had to decide when to jump. The bare-footed boatman was excited and in Portuguese was exhorting her to jump—*jump*! She did eventually—fairly and squarely on the poor devil’s bare toes!

The multiple events of that trip would furnish material for a chapter—but eventually we did arrive home at Criccieth and I didn’t see the Atlantic Ocean again until I went to South America, for which I was not profoundly sorry.

Sea-sickness is a distressing complaint, but my mother could not stop the tears of mirth pouring down her cheeks even when endeavouring to administer the needful solace. I have always regarded Nelson as a hero—but how he ever won *any* victory beats me.

## CHAPTER XVII

*Chware Cymro digrifuch;  
Chware Sais angeu.*

British frolic's soft and gay;  
Saxons kill you as they play.

By your leave we will now cock a snook at my *bête noire*, Old Man Time, and do a backward leap to a date some centuries before the coming of the Christian Era—to the period of Prydain, the son of Aedd the Great. Now, in case you don't know it, the Eisteddfod is as ancient as this. At least, the Gorsedd, an essential part of the modern Eisteddfod, existed almost as long before the coming of the Saviour as the world has lived since His advent. Actually, in the Welsh tongue there is only a shade of difference between Gorsedd (lit. "throne") and Eisteddfod ("a session," or "a sitting"). By whichever name the national bardic congress of Wales, whose prime object is to encourage poetry and music and literature among my countrymen, and to cultivate a patriotic spirit in the people, is as old as any known man-made thing in this tight little isle. According to antiquaries, it was not until the twelfth century that these bardic congresses were called Eisteddfodau. So, as regards the name, this annual festival is a mere eight hundred years old—but this is a quibble over a matter of nomenclature.

There is abundant proof that the Eisteddfod in some form came into being in the time of Owain ap Maxen Wledig, a Welshman who was elected to the chief sovereignty of the Britons when the Romans ended their occupation of the island at the close of the fourth century. But the present name for the "session" or "sitting" seems not to have been applied to those bardic congresses until A.D. 1100.

Anyhow, the motto of the Eisteddfod, "*Y gwir yn erbyn y byd*" (The truth against the world), is fifteen centuries old, as are the codified laws and usages of the Gorsedd.

All this and much more my mother taught us children almost as soon as we could toddle. To her and to my father the Eisteddfod was and is the most important annual happening in the life of Wales. Together they attended close on fifty of them. Incidentally, of all the honours which have come to him in the course of his long, crowded life I am sure he treasures none more than the

title of Bard which, by virtue of great and painstaking effort, he duly won.

But, to resume this sketchy outline of the great Welsh institution, let me try to set it down as my mother used to tell the fascinating story. Now, once upon a time, more than 1400 years ago, there was a prince of North Wales called Maelgwn Gwynedd who had two outstanding characteristics. As passionately fond of singing as he was contemptuous of all kinds of instrumental music, he also had an impish sense of humour. So, away back there in the sixth century, he decided that that year's Eisteddfod should prove once and for all that the human throat could produce harmony such as could never be produced by any man-made instrument. Whether or not it was of his doing, the location of this especial Eisteddfod suited his plan perfectly. For it was decided to hold the festival on the banks of the Conway, a broad stretch of water that joins the sea where now stands Conway Castle, "which," as the American said, "was a very swell old castle—but a pity they built it on the railroad." As a condition of entering the musical competitions Prince Maelgwn ruled that only such instrumentalists and singers as swam across the Conway would be allowed to compete for the prizes.

Naturally, the singers were in nowise handicapped, but the poor instrumentalists—their harps and lyres and what-not ruined by long immersion in the water—hadn't an earthly! Of course, in later years, the personal preference of the master of ceremonies was not permitted to give an unfair advantage to any set of contestants, awards being made only by a majority vote of strictly unbiased judges.

About six hundred years later another prince of North Wales, Gruffydd ap Cynan, who was born in Ireland, persuaded many Irish musicians to cross the sea and settle in Snowdonia. Although my mother was disinclined to accept the story as true, the consensus of opinion amongst research workers is that these Irish musicians did much to improve the quality of music in Wales. Certain it is, at any rate, Prince Gruffydd ap Cynan did much during his reign of more than half a century to encourage bards, minstrels and harpists. Also he framed a code of laws for the better regulation of the various contests. It was this prince who first gave an international flavour to the Eisteddfod, admitting to the contests musicians and singers from England and Scotland.

## THE PORTRAIT

The first such Eisteddfod was held early in the twelfth century at Caerwys in Flintshire.

Under Gruffydd ap Cynan the Eisteddfod became a triennial instead of an annual festival, and this custom continued for many years after the death of this prince. Also, his enactments were rigidly observed and enforced for several centuries. He was the father of Owen Gwynedd.

From its inception a movable gala, those early Eisteddfodau were held most often at Aberffraw, the ancient royal seat of the princes of North Wales; at Mathrafal, the royal palace of the princes of Powys; and at Dynevor, the royal castle of the princes of South Wales. Subsequently Caerwys in Flintshire applied for and got the honour of holding the Eisteddfod within its precincts, basing its claim on the fact that it had been the royal residence of Llewelyn the Last.

When England annexed Wales the great importance which the Welsh attach to the Eisteddfod had to be taken into account by the English. So it was the famous statute of Rhuddlan was enacted, Edward I being told by his advisers that it would be politic to sanction the ancient bardic institution. Thereafter the Eisteddfodau continued to be held, chiefly by royal mandate, until the Elizabethan era. For some reason, when the Tudors ceased to reign, a period of about two centuries ensued during which not one Eisteddfod was held. It was not until the close of the Napoleonic wars that there was reborn intense national feeling in Wales, one of the first results of which was the resumption of the Eisteddfod, and from that time to date the festival has been held annually without intermission.

Actually there are two sorts of Eisteddfodau, local and national. The national Eisteddfod must be "proclaimed" by the Archdruid at the Gorsedd a year and a day before it is to take place. No proclamation is required in the case of a local Eisteddfod. A national Eisteddfod lasts for six days. For each day a different president and a conductor are appointed. Pomp marks the opening proceedings, a flourish of trumpets announcing the convocation of the Gorsedd. Now the candidates come forward and, having satisfied the presiding bard as to their fitness, receive bardic degrees. This is followed by a brief address by the Archdruid. Prizes and medals are awarded in the Eisteddfod to the successful competitors for poetical, musical and prose competitions, for the best choral and



solo singing, and singing with the harp or "Pennillion singing," as it is called. There are also awards for the best playing of the harp and string and wind instruments. Sometimes prizes are also given for the best specimens of handicraft and art. Each day a concert is given in the evening, and it always attracts a capacity audience.

The big moment comes on "Chair" day—the fourth day—the grand event of the Eisteddfod being the adjudication on the "Chair" ode, and the chairing and investiture of the fortunate winner—the highest aim of a Welsh bard's ambition. My father is automatic choice for Presidency on that day. Once (and, I believe, only one) this climax of the impressive ceremonies was marred by tragedy. It happened during the First World War. I was in France at the time, but I had my mother's eyewitness account later. As is customary, after a fanfare of trumpets, the vast crowd heard the winner's name called out by the presiding bard. In the ordinary way the man thus named makes his way through the ranks of the wildly cheering audience to the platform, where he is "chaired." But this time no one moved. Twice more the winner's name was called out, and still nothing happened. At that moment a note was handed to the Archdruid. It announced the death in action of the winner. They draped the chair in black, and the great gathering stood hushed in silence. Then their emotions swept them into song. The winner was dead but his winning composition will always live.

Nowadays the Eisteddfod is an open-to-all-comers event. Sometimes the prizes go to English, Scottish and Irish competitors. Never have I heard of anyone's charging the adjudicators with even a suspicion of national bias. Their purity is beyond suspicion. The very soul of the Eisteddfod is its impersonality, its one aim being to give the world the best that finite brains can produce in words and music. No wonder it filled my mother's heart with joy and pride. For, like her, the Eisteddfod is utterly and exclusively Welsh.

As a small boy and as a grown man I never had more fun than I had with my mother at the Eisteddfod. And trust her to see the fun, however deeply it might be hidden from other eyes. There was, for instance, the time when Patti (then living in Wales) graced the festival with her presence. My mother, who knew the diva well, invited her to sit beside her. After the intricate

ceremony of the chairing is over the great audience sing "*Hen Wlad fy Nhadau*," our national anthem. On this occasion Patti sang the verses and the crowd then joined in the refrain. The master of ceremonies or conductor for that year was a much-loved miners' leader named Mabon (his bardic name). He was in the House of Commons with my father and had a voice like a bull. He stood alongside Patti—and roared the refrain. Before she went to her seat Patti said to him, "You know, Mabon, you have a very fine singing voice."

"So have you, Madame!" said the unabashed old warrior.

Then there was the Eisteddfod which William Randolph Hearst attended—the event coinciding with one of the American newspaper proprietor's rare visits to Wales. He had bought St. Donat's Castle and invited the bards there to dinner. The Eisteddfod was being held that year at a town a few miles away, and my father and mother, as bards, were guests and could speak with first-hand knowledge. She told me how course followed course, the variety and quantity of the choice viands making the most sumptuous of banquets look like a snack luncheon. Midway through the banquet Hearst told his guests he had had a special treat prepared for them. They were about to be able to toast one another in a drink as ancient as the Eisteddfod itself. And as he spoke, in came the small army of waiters bearing huge bowls of silver containing mead, that ambrosial nectar which was in fact the drink of the ancient Britons. Where and how he had got the fermented honey which is the drink's base my father did not discover, but of course the Hearst resources could enable him to work greater wonders than this. In any event, my father confessed to my mother that *that* mead was definitely potent. My mother could guess it from the *hwyf* and the flow of bardic wit. Maelgwn Gwynedd should have been there. He very likely was.

From Owain ap Maxen Wledig to William Randolph Hearst—passing Adelina Patti *en route*—there was my mother's thumbnail sketch of the Eisteddfod, occupying only a few golden minutes in the telling.

## CHAPTER XVIII

*Tair colofn barn; eon  
amcan; mynych arfer;  
a mynych gamsynied.*

Three columns rear achievement:  
Purpose bold,  
Continual effort,  
Failures manifold.

BARDIC.

THE Peace Conference in Paris was a tremendous affair. The delegations of the various nations overflowed all the largest hotels, and accommodation was at a premium. It is so characteristic of my mother never to have evinced the slightest desire to be present. To her mind it was a Heaven-sent opportunity to get out of London and spend a few months of glorious peace among her own people. The war was over, she had played her part nobly—let them get on with their Peace. Most women would have given anything to have been in the centre of it all, meeting and hearing the views of the greatest figures in the world, watching the clash of personalities and the intrigues of the nations great and small, queening it as hostess in the Rue Nitot and in the various receptions. To her the decisions of the Criccieth Urban District Council were more vital and lasting. And her shrewdness has not proved her very wrong. She was worried about the physical and mental strain on my father, his was the hardest task of all. He had been in political office since 1905—all of them years of fighting and trouble, mostly brought on himself, as our dear old Sarah used to say in those days! He was in Paris between two terribly contrasting personalities, Wilson and Clemenceau. The former trying to put Tennyson's Parliament of Man into practical politics, with nothing to back it up except signatures and vague covenants. I was in Japan a few years later and thought of poor Wilson and his covenants. On the other hand the old Tiger—fighting for France, France, and only France. He showed his teeth when anyone dared to ask any concessions from France. Crush and humiliate Germany and elevate France. Do what you like with the rest of Europe and the World. Between these two extremes, with no connecting link, either religious or political, my very tired father had to battle his way and try and win some form of agreement. My mother brought him home after the signature; and it was here that the King, with that touch that made him so



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BRIDGE OVER THE DWYFOR AT LLANYSTUDWDY



much beloved, paid them both a signal honour. The King and the Queen went to meet them at Victoria Station. They drove in State to Buckingham Palace. Two landaus drawn by Windsor greys—and a Sovereign's escort.

They dined at the Palace—a very small intimate party—and I believe it was that evening, when they were alone together, that the King, after congratulating my father on the conclusion of his almost impossible task, intimated his desire to confer some honour upon him. Forestalling my father's shying at this, His Majesty very cunningly mentioned that England, Scotland and Ireland had their own Orders of Chivalry: England, The Garter; Scotland, The Thistle; and Ireland, The Order of St. Patrick. Wales had nothing. He wished to create a new Order of St. David. He would be the Head of the Order and he wished my father to be the first recipient. Very wily! My father was on the horns of a dilemma. Here was a chance indeed to do something for Wales—but, like his great old chief Gladstone, he had determined to remain a commoner. It was a sad pity in many ways the project was laid aside. The Order could have been formed and the most distinguished of the existing Welsh Peers could have added K.D. to their names. He could have still remained David Lloyd George. For purely personal reasons I rejoiced when my mother told me; motley is more my wear than ermine. He accepted on her behalf the highest honour—the Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire.

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Since writing the above, and while this book was in process of being put into print, certain events occurred to which I feel I ought to make reference, without, however, altering in any form my account of 1919. My father has accepted an Earldom at the hands of the King, and in doing so becomes Earl Lloyd George of Dwyfor, Viscount Gwynedd. This is not to be wondered at when it is realized that in a few months he would have completed fifty-five years of unbroken service to Caernarvon Boroughs, and that they have been as faithful to him as he has been to them. The time had arrived, he thought, for a younger man to take over this responsibility.

I have been asked many times recently why my father, the erstwhile bitter opponent of the Lords, should choose now to join them. My father, in his historic and devastating campaign against

the House of Lords in 1909, never bore any malice against the Peers as individual human beings; what he fought against, and successfully, was their power as a constituted body to thwart the will of the people of Britain. The consequence of the Parliament Act has been that the House of Lords today is a much more dignified and useful Chamber than it was in the riotous days of 1908-10. A similar example may be seen in the case of the Church in Wales. Prior to its Disestablishment in 1920, the Church in Wales was merely a bedraggled appendage of the Church of England, having no real part in the life of the nation, and disliked and distrusted by the great majority of the people. Nowadays it is a powerful, live, progressive corporate body, conducting its services in the old language and entering fully into the various activities of the nation. These two achievements my father may well be proud of.

There has been much misconception which, perhaps, it would be as well to put right, as to the meaning of *Dwyfor*. The *Dwyfor* is a small stream in South Caernarvonshire; in its total meandering length of about twelve miles from the head of Pennant Vale to the sea at Llanystumdwy, it more than makes up in romantic charm and beauty for its insignificant size. My father's choice of title may seem inexplicable to many: "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?"; but that little *Dwyfor* means more to him than all the mighty Mississippis of the world. He played on its banks as a boy, and still loves to wander within hearing of the sound of its music.

The *dwy* in *Dwyfor* and Llanystumdwy is not the Welsh *two* as many scribes have maintained. It is another word for "river," as in *Dyfrdwy*—the border river, Dee. His second title of Viscount, which I bear by courtesy, is Gwynedd, which, as I have previously explained, is the old province of North Wales. He has, in this instance, carried on his bardic name, *Llwyd o Wynedd* (Lloyd of Gwynedd).

Sir William Orpen had been appointed the official artist and portrait-painter to the Conference, and in turn he painted all the leading figures. One of my mother's favourites was Mr. William Hughes, the Prime Minister of Australia. Apart from his being Welsh and Welsh-speaking, he had a sense of humour which

## THE PORTRAIT

appealed to her greatly. Orpen worked away down his list until he came to Billy Hughes. Now Billy is not a film star by any means—his features are, shall we say, homely and honest. "Now, Mr. Hughes," said Orpen, "I want to paint you." "No, no," said W. H., "I really haven't the time, I'm far too busy." Orpen was crestfallen and entreated, "Please, Mr. Hughes, I must have all the Dominion Prime Ministers." "Well," said the impatient little Welshman, "I'll give you two sittings." "But, Mr. Hughes, I cannot possibly do you justice in two sittings!" exclaimed poor Orpen. "Good God, man," said Billy, "it's not justice I want, it's mercy!"

The first break from the exhausting work of the Peace Conference was of my mother's engineering. By midsummer 1919 my father was well-nigh worn out, and much in need of a rest. So my mother insisted he take a holiday. She chose the spot—Deauville—and saw to it that only people capable of merry-making should be included in the party. Besides Lord Riddell there were Eric Geddes, Sir Hamar (now Lord) and Lady Greenwood, and Captain Ernest Evans, one of my father's secretaries.

During this holiday at Deauville my father got into a good-natured argument with Geddes about *the size of their legs*! Geddes was prepared to bet his calf was at least 3 inches bigger around than my father's—the disputants egged on by Churchill (who had joined the party) and the others until a show-down became inescapable. So my mother produced a tape-measure and the two men pulled up their trouser legs. Geddes' calf measurement was  $17\frac{1}{2}$  inches, my father's 16 inches. The former was as much downcast with chagrin and surprise as my father was patently exultant! How many Prime Ministers have engaged in a duel of this kind with one of their Cabinet Ministers?

Because it is one of the rare instances of any of my mother's utterances being preserved in print (until now) I once again quote from a book of Lord Riddell's, *The Peace Conference and After*:

"L. G. I must let the public know that there is a personal feud which is the reason for Northcliffe's continuous attacks. Then the public will learn how much importance to attach to them (laughing heartily). I think I am entitled to enjoy myself a little. I always used to be attacking somebody. Lately I have



had to live the life of a recluse. I can never attack anybody, but people are always attacking me. I don't mind attacks if I can reply. I hate having to suffer in silence.

*Mrs. L. G.* Quite right. I don't believe in taking attacks and abuse in a resigned, humble way."

How character-revealing those few words are. There was no turning the other cheek in my mother's make-up!

I have said my mother was a great comic, and that there is a great deal of the actor in my father. Because comedy was my mother's forte I am inclined to the opinion that it accounted largely for my father's impromptu bits of acting being generally in a humorous vein. Had my mother been a tragedienne I am quite sure my father would have gone in for tragic rôles. So in what follows I see my mother's influence plainly leading my father into the paths which he knew she would have chosen had she been in his place. Again I quote from *The Peace Conference and After*:

"April 17th, 1921 (Sunday)—To Chequers. Mrs. L. G., Megan and Miss Cazalet [now Mrs. Cazalet Keir, M.P.], L. G. in great form, joking and laughing . . . he gave an amusing imitation of Megan's singing and then proceeded to give her lessons as to how she should open her mouth, etc. On Monday morning at breakfast he had a big batch of Parliamentary papers with his draft answers. . . . He gave an amusing imitation of the way in which the various questions would be put to him, imitating the different members in whose names they stood, and indicating how he would reply. A real bit of comedy."

Like all actors, my father had need of only one thing to inspire him to turn on the thespian stop—an audience. But by the same token any actor will tell you there are audiences and audiences. So far as my father was concerned, no audience was worthy of his best unless it included my mother.

I believe it was his unchanging desire to win her approbation as a comedian on a par with herself that largely accounted for his insistence on her accompanying him on his journeys out of London. It probably is the reason he persuaded her to go with him—in the autumn of 1921—to Gairloch, where he was to meet the Sinn Féin representatives.

In the midst of the hectic proceedings my father was taken ill, seriously ill. The swelling of one side of his face told my mother what was the matter—an abscess in his jaw. Hot poultices which she applied allayed the pain somewhat, but it was obvious the ailment was not to be cured by any home-made remedies. First a local doctor was called in, and he promptly sent for a dentist from Inverness. Meanwhile my mother—as calm and collected, *and* as efficient as always in a crisis—telegraphed for Lord Dawson of Penn. His diagnosis, when at last he arrived, was that a badly ulcerated tooth was poisoning my father's system. Unless it was removed immediately the results might be serious. So the dentist, with the aid of an anaesthetist from Inverness, extracted the molar. They did their work very well indeed, and thoroughly deserved the compliments bestowed upon them by the King's physician. But it seems to me their work was no more skilful than my mother's action was inspired.

It so happened that a great friend of the family—Madoc Davies, a grand singer of Welsh songs—was staying in the house. While my father was under the anaesthetic my mother got hold of him and sat him at the piano in the adjoining room. So it was, as my father began to come out of the gas, he heard Welsh melodies being sung in robust fashion! Who except my mother could have thought of that one?

(You will perhaps recall my saying earlier my mother was not overmuch inclined to playing the rôle of the poet's "ministering angel," and her behaviour on this occasion does not seem to me to refute that statement. For a man to have a tooth out to the accompaniment of music was essentially *comical*, and no one appreciated this more than did my father.)

On the other hand, my mother's wide-open eyes saw that my father had had a narrow squeak, and was far from well in the days following the tooth extraction. And with the Gairloch post office swamped with the deluge of telegrams which De Valera was cascading at my father, as well as to his representatives, it was highly important for the invalid to recover his strength at the earliest possible moment. But mollycoddling, my mother knew, was not the way to go about putting him on his feet.

By this time almost every member of the Cabinet had arrived in the Highlands. They included Churchill, Mond, Macnamara, Birkenhead, Montagu and Hilton-Young. Present also at every

conference was Lord Dawson, who did not consider it wise to leave the patient in his run-down condition, and who saw to it that my father reclined at full length on a couch while the conferences were going on. What none of them knew was the fact that my mother was in the next room, listening to all that was being said. So she heard my father make a long, impassioned speech. At its conclusion she appeared in the doorway. Ignoring the others, she addressed herself to my father.

"Goodness," she said in Welsh, "you talk as if this were a public meeting!"

That was all. The next moment she was gone. And only my father understood what she had said. But it did the trick. From then on he wasted no more of his depleted vitality on making fiery speeches. Again, you will note, my mother made no emotional appeal for him to spare his strength; she chose rather to remind him of the incongruity of haranguing his colleagues and the deputation as if he were on a platform addressing the electorate in a General Election campaign. And note the delicacy with which she concealed the import of what she had to say—using a language known by none of them except my father.

The treaty was signed in Inverness.

One last reference to those negotiations leading up to the signing of the Irish treaty must be made because it brings to light yet another, heretofore unpublished tribute to my mother—and from a most surprising source. For the anecdote I am indebted to Hayden Talbot, whom Michael Collins appointed as his official biographer and whose book, *Michael Collins' Own Story*, was published in London a few weeks after the Irish leader's assassination at the hands of his own countrymen.

"Collins had a very high opinion of your father's political skill," Talbot told me. "Much of what he had to say about 'the Welsh Wizard,' as he called him, I incorporated in his biography. One tale, however, I did not tell. It had no seeming relevance. But in thinking that I was undoubtedly mistaken.

"It happened one evening when I was alone with the Big Fellow in his suite of rooms in the old Gresham hotel in Dublin. I'd been chiding Mick for being a bachelor, telling him if ever a man stood in need of a good wife he was that man. Not a little to my surprise he, for once, did not hotly dispute the provocative statement. In effect he agreed with me, but he would not explain

his determination to go on eschewing marriage. Since then I have come to the conclusion that he had a premonition of his death and would make no woman his wife only to make her his widow in a matter of days.

“‘Don’t think I don’t know how much a good wife means to a man,’ he said. ‘Sure, I’ve seen with my own eyes what a good wife can do for her husband. Cunning as a fox they say the Welsh Wizard is. Clever and artful and full of guile. But I’ll let you into a secret. He’ll never live to see the day when he’ll outsmart that quiet little wife of his. She’s a jump ahead of him all the time and has all the wisdom of Eve in keeping that fact very much to herself. A lucky man is the Welsh Wizard! God knows what I’d give to have a wife like that.’”

## CHAPTER XIX

*Gwell tewi no drygddywedyd.*

When a wise word's out of reach,  
Silence better is than speech.

HAVING repeatedly stressed that my mother held herself aloof from the game of politics, I realize only this belatedly that I must have created an entirely wrong impression of her activities in the field of political campaigning. It is true she herself had no political aspirations, nor did political issues hold any vital appeal. But her whole life was devoted to helping the other fellow, whoever or whatever he might be, and naturally appeals for help from members of her family had pride of place. In the General Election of 1905-6 my father was tearing round the country. In Scotland, England and Wales—elections were not held on the same day—he addressed meetings in all the key constituencies. Caernarvon Boroughs were largely left to my mother and myself. Anyway, our combined oratory and canvassing—together with a grandstand finish by our candidate himself—got him a thumping majority. Again in 1921, when my father was much concerned about a Parliamentary election in Cardigan-shire. Let me quote Lord Riddell's *Intimate Diary*:

“19th February—To Chequers. Long talk with L. G. Much excited over the Cardigan election, in which Ernest Evans, his secretary, is opposing Llewelyn Williams. The result expected every minute when I arrived. Mrs. L. G. has been working like a Trojan in the constituency, delivering fifty-eight speeches in a fortnight. While L. G. and I were walking in the park she came running out breathless, to tell him that Evans had won by a majority of 3,500. He was delighted and said that if the result had been the other way it would have been a serious personal set-back. He warmly embraced Mrs. L. G., bestowing several hearty kisses upon her and telling her that she had won the election. . . . For some time he spoke of little else but the election. He said that Mrs. L. G. had displayed remarkable skill, and had said some very shrewd things, particularly on the drink question. She is no doubt very popular. Her simple, direct ways appeal to the people.”

Knowing my mother, I can quite understand her having campaigned for Ernest Evans. He was her friend. Ernie and I were at Cambridge together; and now, sad to relate, he is a Judge and very dignified. Remove the wig and you'll find *Ernie bach*. And I suggest fifty-eight speeches in a fortnight would tax the strength of the toughest of male campaigners.

Nor is the victory which my father said she won to be dismissed as something in the nature of a walk-over. For Llewelyn Williams was Recorder of Cardiff, and had been a Liberal M.P. for Carmarthen from 1906 to 1918. With such a background he was indeed a doughty opponent. But I have always clung to the conviction that if my mother set her mind to it she could do—anything.

Whether Lord Riddell held this view is not disclosed in his several books, but I find his quoting my father's summing up of her character especially intriguing. Here is the excerpt from Lord Riddell's *Intimate Diary*:

"31st December 1919—Conversed with L. G. on the subject of wives.

*L. G.* Sometimes I wonder whether it is well for a wife to be appreciative of her husband. My wife never was. She never thought I should make a great mark. When I was first asked to stand for Parliament she dissuaded me.

*R.* But when you made the plunge, she displayed great courage.

*L. G.* Yes, she is full of courage, and she never hankered after society. She kept me to the simple life. That was a great advantage. Even now I feel that it is good for me to come down here [Criccieth] and live in a simple way. Temperamentally I like a simple life. Society has no attractions for me, but it is well to have a wife whose interests are centred entirely in her modest home."

Every man, including my father, is entitled to his own opinion, of course, but it is my opinion that he was quite in error about my mother's not being appreciative of his talents. In my opinion it was *not* because she thought he would not succeed in politics that led her to dissuade him from standing for Parliament the first time he was invited to contest an election; it was because she *knew* he could make "a great mark" for himself as a lawyer.

And in those early days of their married life money was too vital a consideration for her to view serenely a future in which her husband would find himself an unpaid M.P.

Further to make amends for having unwittingly created the impression that my mother took no interest and no part in politics, and to provoke a chuckle, the episode of the Cardiff Deputation is well worth the telling here.

As always, my memory as to the date of the incident is quite vague. All I can be sure of is that it happened while we were living in Downing Street, but whether at No. 10 or No. 11 I cannot remember. In any event, the elevation of my father to Cabinet rank had had altogether unexpected (and, until the arrival of the Deputation, unsuspected) repercussions in Wales. It seemed South Wales especially placed tremendous importance on a Welshman's becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer (or Prime Minister, as the case may have been). More to the point, it made some of them feel tremendously *self*-important. The outcome was the framing of a Resolution and the appointing of the Deputation to bring it to London and present it to my father.

Now, as it happened, my father was too busy to see them when the silk-hatted, frock-coated dignitaries of Cardiff arrived at our house. When the Welsh maidservant brought word of their presence to my mother, she decided to see them herself. I dare say they were not disposed to be side-tracked by a mere woman, but she speedily let them know that they could choose between telling her what was on their minds and returning to Wales with their secret still their own. So, faced with this ultimatum, they reluctantly delivered the message which they had meant to give only to my father in person.

As their spokesman the Lord Mayor of Cardiff made his carefully prepared speech, the gist of it being that now that my father had risen to such great heights in the Government it was altogether unfitting for him to represent such a relatively unimportant constituency as the Caernarvon Boroughs; henceforth it was only right that he should be the M.P. for Cardiff.

Well, that did it. The explosion that followed the belittling of Snowdonia shook these Cardiff bigwigs to their marrow. Eyes blazing, and scorn filling every syllable, my mother told the dumb-founded Deputation just what she thought of them, as a whole and individually. Some of them understood Welsh—this she

knew—so the more worked up she got, the more home-made acid entered into the tanning. It was a two-fisted, bilingual knock-out. So Caernarvonshire was relatively unimportant, was it? Not good enough to have her husband as its M.P.! Well, let them think back a bit—to the days when her husband was being excoriated as a pro-Boer. Had they wanted him as their M.P. then? They had not! They had reviled him as foully as anybody. But the electorate of the Caernarvon Boroughs had never wavered, they had remained loyal and true blue. And it would be for them—and never for such self-seeking turncoats as these fawning sycophants of Cardiff—that my father would continue to work in Parliament. How did they dare think he was of their ilk? Hunting with the hounds and running with the hares. As long as he remained in politics my father would represent the constituency which first sent him to Parliament and which had stood by him through thick and thin. And now let them put that in their pipe and smoke it. Let them go back to Cardiff and tell the other defamers of Snowdonia who had sent them with this infamous proposal that her husband's answer was an unqualified *No*!

And I have her word for it that that erstwhile imposing, self-complacent Deputation slunk out of the house with its tail between its legs.

She told my father about it, of course, and however much he may have deplored her forthrightness he had to agree that she had given the Deputation the only possible answer. It was not until passing time had mollified her earlier rage that she saw the funny side of the episode, and enshrined it in her collection of choicest comicalities.

At any rate, it must be accepted as convincing that my mother did—on rare occasions—take the dominating rôle in my father's political career.

Again I feel it affords a clearer insight into the kind of home my mother made for us to make use of an outsider's impression than to describe it myself. For this reason I once more quote from Lord Riddell's *Intimate Diary*:

“28th December 1919. To Criccieth. . . . I wrote a letter of thanks to L. G. at Criccieth [for having advised His Majesty to give Riddell a peerage], in which I said amongst other things that our friendship had been one of the joys of my life and that



many of my happiest hours had been spent with him. When I reached Criccieth, I thanked him again. He said, 'My dear boy, it has been a pleasure to be able to do it for you!' . . . L. G. is much taken up with his little granddaughter, Margaret [the daughter of Olwen]. At meal-times he takes her on his knee and feeds her with tit-bits, and is perpetually walking hand-in-hand with her about the house. She is a dignified, clever little creature. There is a great contrast between the life here and that in the millionaire's flat in which L. G. lived in Paris, with its French cooking, etc. This is a comfortable villa, such as a prosperous tradesman might have. Everything is comfortable, but there are no frills. L. G. is very adaptable. When one sees him here, one would never imagine that he had ever lived under any other conditions. Full of fun with his wife and children. Today he was much perturbed about the health of his small nephew, and descanted at length upon the diet which should be provided for the small boy."

I suppose Lord Riddell's comparing Brynawelon as "a villa" is fair enough. But to us children it was not the house of brick and mortar, nor its furnishings, that made it seem *the* home of homes. It was the spirit of my mother that accounted for that. Every time I return to Criccieth, now that she is no longer there to greet me, I realize more and more how really ordinary the house is. Without my mother under its roof it is just that—a most ordinary house. Even Megan, who inherited it, has discovered that all the charm, all the homey sense of well-being which *seemed* to be the distinctive thing about Brynawelon have faded. She knows now, as do I, that it was not the house, it was my mother who made the place fragrant with loveliness and good cheer.

According to my mother, one of the most anxious times she ever lived through—and at the same time one of the most invigorating holidays she ever spent on the Continent—was when my father went to Switzerland two years after the end of the First World War to meet Giolitti, the Italian Prime Minister. In London there had been rumours of a planned attempt to assassinate my father if he visited the Continent, and naturally this worried my mother. The fact that Scotland Yard expressed disapproval of the proposed trip served to add to her anxiety. But my father

declared he must have a holiday, and was insistent on spending it in the Swiss mountains. So, in the end, he overruled my mother's objections. Off they went—my mother, Megan, Gwilym, Sir Maurice and Lady Hankey and their son, J. T. Davies, Miss Cazalet, and Miss Evans, a Welsh singer—a very good party indeed. The fact that three detectives never let my father out of their sight proved how seriously Scotland Yard considered the danger was, but this had no depressing effect on the high spirits of the gay party.

The King of the Belgians had given my father the use of the Villa Hasilhorn in Lucerne as headquarters for the holiday-makers, but my mother's enjoyment was definitely marred by her discovery that the place was surrounded day and night by the Swiss police. After the arrival of Giolitti my mother learned that six men had been arrested as suspects, but the Lucerne police seemed not to be sure whether the prisoners had designs on my father or on the Italian Prime Minister. In describing this tall, stately old man (he was then seventy-eight) my mother told me he was as smart as a fox, with cunning in his eyes. She made me laugh with her word-picture of the two Premiers—the one very tall and walking with a stately tread, with my father almost trotting by his side!

The holiday ran its course without anything happening to spoil the party's pleasure, but my mother did not breathe freely until they were all safely back in London. But she kept her fears to herself and, on the surface, was throughout those anxious days her usual cheery self.

One of the most amusing incidents during the post-war period in which my mother figured came as a side-splitting climax to a long after-dinner "speech" by my father. His point was that all truly great men were exceedingly talkative. To prove his point he named Julius Caesar, Napoleon, Nelson, Gladstone, Clemenceau, Winston, Northcliffe, and heaven only knows how many others. When, finally, he came to the end of the "speech," and looked about the table as if inviting any of his guests to attempt to refute what he had to say, there was a momentary lull. It was broken presently by my mother—in her typically demure fashion.

"And there," she said, "goes the myth about the strong, *silent* man!"

How my mother's love of a joke seemed to infect all about her

was forcefully recalled to my mind during a recent visit to Criccieth. Although more than two years had elapsed since her death, there was still left *in the kitchen* at Brynawelon a lively sense of her unique sense of humour.

Megan, resting from her Parliamentary labours, was feeling too seedy on the day in question to want to leave the house, so alone I started off on a trout-fishing expedition. It was midsummer and the water was really too low in the stream I elected to fish to offer much prospect of a good catch. But at the end of the day I did have five little brown trout in my creel, and was quite satisfied. Returning home, I handed the tiny fish over to Roberts, my mother's old cook, and asked her to serve them as a separate course at dinner. There was nothing in her grave-faced acknowledgment of these instructions to give me so much as a hint of what was in her mind. Not until Megan and I, dining alone, had finished our soup had we an inkling of the mischief (absolutely of my mother's inspiring) old Sarah and Roberts had been up to.

In came the most enormous fish platter imaginable—intended for an outsize salmon—a purchase made by my mother during one of her visits to Italy. Placed neatly side by side in the very centre of the great dish were my five tiny trout!

But at least we had them, which is more than my father can say about a catch he once made. On that occasion he had taken his party of distinguished house guests on a day's fishing trip in the bay. The total catch was nothing to boast about, mostly mackerel if I remember, but such fish as they did bring home must be especially cured, my father insisted. This consisted in their being split open and well salted, then exposed for a night and a day in the open air. This part of the job he did himself, using clothes-pegs to fasten them to the clothes-line behind the house. In the morning he took my mother out to show her how this airing of the salted fish had improved them—but all that was left of them was the tiny bits still held by the clothes-pins. Our cats, of which we always had several, had managed during the night to indulge in some fancy high jumping and had gobbled the lot!

## CHAPTER XX

*Gnawd cyrchyniad  
yn mhob bro.*

Every land, that eye can range,  
Beside the native hath the strange.

UTOPIA, to find which happiness seekers have searched the four corners of the earth, is actually (if at all) where Maeterlinck proves it to be in his delightful fantasy, *The Blue Bird*. And in all her long life my mother was never in any doubt about this. Few women were more widely travelled, and certainly her thirty-odd years in London qualified her to pass judgment on it as a permanent abode. But all that London had to offer, like the Continent, the East, South America, and the United States, appealed less to her than the joy she found in Criccieth. Wherefore it is not strange that my mother viewed the end of my father's heading the Government as the beginning of real home life for her and her family. Now at long last there was no longer any need of her "making camp" in residences that go with political jobs; she could go home.

In this connection, I am inclined to believe what my father had to say about his young bride's seeking to dissuade him from embarking on a political career. Even if she had no idea that it would result in their having to occupy Nos. 11 and 10 Downing Street, she obviously sensed the enforced exile from Snowdonia. And that prospect was quite saddening enough to account for her having tried to persuade him to rest content with his North Wales law practice.

Viewed in retrospect, my mother's life (curiously fitting in with the Welsh theory that everything happens in threes) was divided into three almost equal parts. And of these, two were blissful. The first period, which covered a full quarter of a century, was spent wholly in her native land. In the second period (1890-1922) she perforce spent the greater part of each year in London, but it was seldom that she did not manage to visit Criccieth at least five or six times every year. Finally, there are the golden years that marked the Indian Summer of her long life, the happiest period of all, with no stern calls of duty to take her away from her beloved Brynawelon. So, on balance, she knew almost as much happiness as she so lavishly gave to others.

Like everything else, happiness is relative. In my mother's case the pinnacle of hers was reached when she had her entire brood under her roof. Perhaps there is nothing noteworthy about this; all mothers may find similar joy in family reunions. But from what I have observed I should say the happiness my mother felt on such occasions as saw all her grown-up children and her grandchildren gathered around the dining-table at Brynawelon has sublimated few women as it did her. In her eyes we were all children even when, as in my case, we had lived beyond the half-century mark!

While these family gatherings continued the last thing any of us ever thought about was going to bed; we were all having too much fun to bother about clocks. More often than not the party would be in full swing long after midnight. And when, finally, we bade one another good-night, and went to our respective bedrooms, it did not mark the end of the doings. Invariably my mother, having herself prepared for bed, donned a dressing-gown and made the rounds of all our bedrooms—to see if we were safely tucked in, or were in need of anything that she could fetch us. Quite as often as not, after I had insisted I was all right and ready for sleep, she would perch on the side of my bed and tell me the newest funny story of local origin. Her reluctance to see the last of us was truly touching. Frequently I had to resort to cajolery to persuade her to get to bed, telling her she would catch her death of cold if she didn't go and get under the blankets. And even then she would linger at the open door, and ask again if there weren't something—a glass of buttermilk or a snack of food—I'd like her to bring me. And this, as like as not, to the accompaniment of the grandfather's clock in the hall downstairs chiming 1 a.m.! It was obvious that the one thing she did not want any of us to say was good-night, and one felt a brute insisting that she must turn in for what was left of the night.

My principal job, as I have already mentioned, was driving my mother in to town, and round about the countryside. Indeed, during the last years of her life her love of paying visits to farm folk scattered throughout North Wales seemed to grow greater and greater. Incidentally, her arrival at one of these outlying farm-houses brought in its train a succession of incidents that never varied and were never omitted. As a matter of fact, it was only

in this third period of my mother's life that I came to appreciate how rigid are the rules of good form in Snowdonia.

Now my mother made a point of never letting anyone know in advance that she was coming to pay a call, thus to emphasize her own wishes to stand on no formality. But in this she never had her own way. Because, as I have earlier explained, almost all these ancient farmhouses were built primarily to serve as watch-towers, and because of the absence of motor vehicles on these back roads of Snowdonia, our approach was noted while we were still several miles away. And by long usage the whole countryside had come to know which farms were always her ports of call. So when I'd pull to a stop in front of one of these old houses, or in the farmyard, I knew the ensuing spectacle would run true to an ancient law of etiquette. The sounds of scurrying to and fro indoors would tell of the household's having been taken completely by surprise by the knocking at the door. (Actually they would have had probably five minutes' advance notice!) Presently the seldom-used front door would be opened—always by the mistress of the farm herself. At sight of my mother on the doorstep she would be sure to express mingled delight and surprise as only they can be expressed in Welsh. Then, as my mother made suitable and simple reply, and held out her hand for the other woman to clasp, the hostess always picked up the voluminous apron she wore, and proceeded to go through the motions of wiping her hands and arms before she would think of grasping my mother's.

With these preliminaries out of the way, either my mother would call the other's attention to me at the wheel of the car, or she'd have recognized me on her own. In either case, *Dic bach* would have to come into the house too—a proceeding interrupted by a renewal of the arms and hands being wiped on the apron.

Oh those farmhouse teas! A more delicious mid-afternoon snack could not be conjured up by the greatest of Continental chefs than will be set before you in the humblest of homes in Snowdonia if you are an especially-to-be-honoured guest, as my mother and all who belonged to her were. *But* they are as filling as they are delicious. After you have had one you don't really care if you go supperless to bed.

Unhappily for me, on these motor trips through the mountains

my mother seldom found it possible to get through her list of visits without having to partake of the gargantuan tea at at least three farms. And obviously I had to make as brave a show as my mother did and eat all that was put in front of me. The alternative, mortally to offend our hostess, was not to be thought of, of course. But each time a great stack of freshly made *Crempogs* was brought from the kitchen and handed round you can guess how fervently I prayed my mother's insistence that she really could eat no more of anything might spare us both. But it never worked. We had to eat the lot—always! Convention demanded it. *Crempogs* are small pancakes made from a batter of eggs, flour and buttermilk (slightly sour for preference). They are covered in farmhouse butter and served with crab-apple jelly. Ye gods!

*Manners maketh man* is the motto of one of Oxford's colleges, and in England there still remains a vestige of that rigid formality which reached its peak in the Victorian era. But in Wales, the otherwise world-wide tendency to scrap correctness of behaviour in favour of the crudities of "being natural" has gained no footing. Prince and peasant, landlord and tenant, rich man and pauper—all conform to the code as did their fathers before them. In Wales politeness is never held up to derision, boorishness is not looked upon as being humorous.

For nearly fifteen years I was much in the company of my maternal grandfather. In all that time I never heard anyone address him by his first name, excepting only his wife and brother. To all and sundry he was Mr. Owen. And he, on his part, was no less meticulously formal. Seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year, his next-door neighbour greeted him with a "Good morning, Mr. Owen." And each of those 365 salutations was acknowledged in kind!

At this moment, in any first-class hostelry in Wales, you will quite probably discover that your waitress is Mrs. Parry, your chambermaid Mrs. Jones! And unless you choose to put yourself down as an outsider, you will address her correctly.

If, within the four walls of our house, and as between ourselves, there was an almost entire absence of formality, we could conduct ourselves correctly when the occasion arose. And even amongst ourselves there were certain conventions which none of us would have dreamed of disregarding. Generally speaking, however,

home meant to all of us a place where we could let our back hair down!

At heart my mother was as unconventional as my father, but whereas in his public life my father made no effort to disguise his dislike of formalities, my mother's great consideration for the sensibilities of others led her to exhibit a punctilious attitude towards all the niceties of proper (Welsh) behaviour in her social intercourse with the lowly and the great alike.

For ordinary folk nothing, I suppose, calls for a greater degree of formality than the anniversary of half a century of wedded life. In the case of a former Prime Minister and a Dame Grand Cross of the British Empire one would assume their Golden Wedding Anniversary would be celebrated in some especially memorable fashion. But such an assumption might be subject to doubt if it were known that the prime mover in the preliminaries was that convention-despising statesman Winston Churchill!

It must appear extraordinary to most people that they should go to the South of France to celebrate the occasion—the natural setting and background for such an occasion was obviously Snowdonia—but for many reasons it had to be otherwise. My father had not been at all well for some time and was actually in Antibes during the winter '37-'38. The Duke of Windsor, Mr. Churchill and a host of other friends were in the Cannes neighbourhood. Churchill and my father I am convinced *knew* they wouldn't see the Riviera again for many a stern year. My mother decided to let my father have his way and give the grandchildren—as many of them as could go—and of course their fathers and mothers, a treat abroad. We set off early in the New Year, about fifteen strong, and arrived at Antibes by the Blue Train after the usual hilarious journey—safely. I often felt our safety was more due to good Yorkshire steel and Yorkshire construction of the train than to the French permanent way.

My mother, curiously enough, in spite of her poise, was a nervous traveller. I remember telling her on this occasion that the train had been built by Leeds Forge—and she said, "Oh, Dick, you don't know how glad I am to hear that. I distrust these French trains—I shall sleep better now." She never went up in a plane, and in a car she summed up the driver rightly or wrongly within the first few minutes. With Gwilym at the wheel she could go



## CHAPTER XXI

*Gweithred llary llywiau nifer.*

Gentle the sway  
Which many obey.

THE death and burial of the biographer's subject is by universal custom the end of his fact recital, and in these next few pages I shall touch on these final phases of my mother's life. But in this instance it will by no means put *finis* to the narrative. Indeed, I hope to make clear in the succeeding chapters that my mother not only still lives in our hearts, her love and laughter persist no less forcefully than when she was present in the flesh. Incidentally, hers was what is called a "natural" death, although it was preceded by an accidental fall which broke a bone. If by "natural" people mean peaceful as contrasted with violent death, I suppose the term is apt enough in my mother's case. But no one, thank heaven, was so stupid as to attribute it to *old age*. Why, the night before she breathed her last she was as full of fun and quips as she was in her girlhood.

Perhaps most of all those closest to her I sensed her approaching demise a year or more before she actually passed away. It did not occur to me at the time that this was so, but in retrospect I can see the true significance of the changes which gradually came over her after the outbreak of war, and realize they were the harbingers of death. Of these changes the outstanding one was her complete lack of interest in the war. Actually this was not apparent to most of those with whom she came in contact during the first "phoney" period of hostilities when we in this country shared the French people's Maginot Line complex. Whereas in the 1914-18 period the casualty lists alone were enough to make all Britons painfully aware of the horrors of war, and with her own Welsh troops in dire need of all the "comforts" she could obtain for them, there was no such impelling need in 1939-40. In those early days of the conflict, then, her attitude was that of the majority of British civilians.

Even the overrunning of the Low Countries and the fall of France left her unmoved. Her apathy persisted after Dunkirk and the beginning of the Battle of Britain. The bombing of London (she was in Town many times during the height of the

## THE PORTRAIT

air raids) failed to stir her—in so far as arousing her to militancy is concerned. The sole effect of the Blitz on her, so far as I could discover, was to make Snowdonia more than ever a hallowed spot. The Hun could destroy and damage man-made temples of great beauty and ancient tradition, but he could not efface the grandeur of her native landscape.

Does this depict her as being callous, selfish? I should be indeed sorry if any such impression grew out of what I have had to say. What I firmly believe is that in this attitude my mother was merely clinging to a lifelong conviction. The architectural beauty, the undeniable splendour of a St. Paul's cathedral could not be denied. The impressiveness of an Arc de Triomphe was equally irrefutable. But for her the unpretentious, unadorned little Seion Chapel in Criccieth was all-sufficient as a place in which to worship her Creator, the snow-capped crown of Snowdon all she needed by way of impressiveness. In war as in peace the countryside, her own Caernarvonshire, was the place for her—not as a refuge from screaming death from the air, but because it was where she belonged. If Hunnish vandalism had spurred the foe to wreak vengeance on the hills and valleys of her native land, a procedure too obviously futile for even the sadistic Nazi leaders to attempt, my mother would still have chosen to be there.

Of course, she was in close touch with all that was happening across the Channel, on the high seas, in North Africa. She was present at a great meeting in Caernarvon early in the course of the war when my father made what history must eventually acclaim as one of the great prophecies of all time. On that occasion she heard him tell the vast gathering that this war would be won—in *Russia!* (And this at a time when Hitler had out-maneuvred Britain by signing a non-aggression pact with the Soviet!) As my father's wife, then, she knew more of the facts and could foresee more clearly the future possibilities of the war than almost any other living woman.

Tremendous as were the issues at stake, and fully awake to the truth though she was, she evinced no interest whatever in the ebb and flow of the battle. The affairs of the little folk in Criccieth and surrounding country were of paramount concern. More and more my services as chauffeur were called upon (when I could get leave) in order that she might visit dear ones in their homes. And always she would bid me make detours that would take us

—a word of advice to a young man to shave before attempting to kiss a maid. You can see the repeating consonants in the rhythm. The only instance of this in English that I actually heard composed occurred one day when the preacher was with my mother and me on a motor run through Caernarvonshire. On one of the narrow mountain roads we overtook a baker's cart. On the back of the high body was printed HOVIS BREAD in huge letters. I sounded the horn time after time, but either the driver was deaf or just disobliging. In any event, he would not pull over to the side of the road and let us pass. Whereupon our guest came out with this:

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Deadly seriousness, however, was the order of the day when my mother set about the task of home-curing sides of bacon. Why she should have elected to make this difficult job her one contribution to the provisions part of our household I never knew, but it is a fact that from the time we left her parents' farm every bit of home bacon that came on to our table was cured by her hands. Once, and only once, I tried to tell her she could improve the flavour by adding a bit of sugar and molasses to the salt which she rubbed into the bacon. Need I say I was told off soundly?

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to vantage points where she could feast her eyes on well-beloved scenes that reminded her of her girlhood days.

During these motor trips she would reminisce as only she could. Listening to her gay chatter it was not easy to keep in mind how really great had been her achievements, how many and how important had been the honours bestowed upon her. Yet it was a fact that she was the first woman ever to preside as a magistrate on the Caernarvon County Bench. She was a member of the Gorsedd, president of various Women's Liberal Associations, etc. Having taken a leading part in founding the Criccieth Women's Institute, in 1916 she became a member of the Associated Countrywomen of the World which she helped to develop. In 1919 she was elected to the Criccieth Urban District Council, and was its chairman for three years. An ardent supporter of the temperance movement, she often spoke on the temperance platform. As president of the Women's Liberal Federation of North and South Wales she did much to bring about unity between the two divisions of the country, the success of her labours later signalized when the presidency was offered to and accepted by Megan.

About these achievements and honours she never talked. But on the slightest provocation she would sing the praises of *the climate of Criccieth!* It was a subject on which she was more than somewhat touchy, and both my father and I (regrettable as it was) used to pull her leg about it! Time after time my father, telephoning from his farm at Churt, would wink at me as he told my mother—on the other end of the wire in Brynawelon—that he could barely hear her because of the frightful din!

"It must be pouring cats and dogs in Criccieth," he would say.

The indignation in her voice as she insisted the sun was shining beautifully had to be heard to be believed.

Statistics showing the amount of rainfall and sunshine in Criccieth meant nothing to her. These she brushed aside with queenly contempt, and entered the argumentative fray with nothing at all except her unquenchable love of her birthplace.

During one of the last trips away from Criccieth that she ever made she came to visit me on the farm I was then operating in Suffolk. Foolishly and incautiously I told her that near by was the driest district in the British Isles, according to comparative statistics recorded for seventy years. Naturally, as a correlative,

this region was also blessed with a greater number of sunshine hours than any other part of the Kingdom. The light of battle shone in my mother's eyes as she started to tear poor old Suffolk to bits. In no time at all she had proved to her own satisfaction that Suffolk was a miasmatic swamp as compared with the perfect climate of South Caernarvonshire! Unfortunately for my case, even as she was talking a terrific thunder-storm broke. Her glee topped my chagrin.

At about this same time my mother paid a visit to my father's farm at Churt. The autumn evening was unusually chilly, and she suggested it would be cheery to have an open fire. Being an engineer, I fancied myself as a fire-builder, but my mother had a poor opinion of my ability in this direction and, as usual, brushed me ruthlessly aside while she arranged the paper and kindling and coals. For a while she did everything in her power to make the fire a success, but finally she had to enlist my aid. But between us we just couldn't make the stubborn fire blaze. Then, suddenly and most unexpectedly, my father seized a poker and jammed it into the middle of the smouldering bits of wood. Instantly a tremendous blaze leaped into being! He stood there like a knight of old, and with a triumphant gesture said, "There you are!" My mother and I exchanged glances, then burst into laughter.

Speaking of fires, I remember when we were living at Walton Heath my mother invested in one of those then new-fangled electric heaters which give the appearance of reality with revolving lights underneath the substitute logs. Now, the day after this gadget was installed was a Sunday—when invariably Lord Riddell came to supper with us. On this occasion there was no one in the living-room when he arrived. Standing before the fireplace he decided the "fire" needed jacking up, and planted his golf boot right in the middle of it! And that was the end of that *ersatz* fire!

One of my mother's dearest friends was the Rev. Thomas Charles Williams, who was a frequent guest at Brynawelon. It was he who used to expound the beauties of Welsh poetry to both my mother and me, pointing out its unique characteristic (in contrast to English poetry) of having to rhyme *within* the line as well as at the end. As an example he would choose a couplet like:

*Caswaith er daed cusan*  
*Ymdrin a merch a'm drain mân*

—a word of advice to a young man to shave before attempting to kiss a maid. You can see the repeating consonants in the rhythm. The only instance of this in English that I actually heard composed occurred one day when the preacher was with my mother and me on a motor run through Caernarvonshire. On one of the narrow mountain roads we overtook a baker's cart. On the back of the high body was printed HOVIS BREAD in huge letters. I sounded the horn time after time, but either the driver was deaf or just disobliging. In any event, he would not pull over to the side of the road and let us pass. Whereupon our guest came out with this:

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of seeing Mr. Jones. So up to old Evan's house the poor girl had to go in fear and trembling. Arrived there, Evan Jones soon put her at her ease and then said, "Well now, *Mari bach*, tell me all about it." "Well,—Mr. Jones,—sir," said poor Mary after some hesitation, "So-and-so" (naming some local Lothario) asked me to go for a walk in the wood with him and I went one evening. We walked for a bit and as it was very fine he said we should sit down for a while. We sat down and talked, and then soon he got very loving, and"—here followed some more details—"then he suddenly put his arms round me very fiercely, and kissed me and kissed me—I was quite breathless—and I fainted—and I don't remember any more."

"*Wel Mari bach, mi gollaist y sport i gyd!*" *meddai'r hen Evan.* ("Mary bach, you missed all the fun!" said old Evan.)

As I have earlier pointed out, there is a wide divergence between the English and the Welsh viewpoint as regards what are and what are not "parlour" stories.

But one beautiful story which she was especially fond of telling had to do with Williams, Pantycelyn, an eighteenth-century poet and hymnologist who is held by many, including myself, to have been one of the greatest of Welsh poets. His hymns will stand comparison with Luther's.

There is nothing definitely known about the location of the chapel where the incident occurred, but in the absence of any proof to the contrary my mother was convinced it was in Criccieth! In this firm belief she was backed up by her grandfather, William Jones, Tyddyn Mawr.

The point of it was that the sound of the waves pounding on the shore could be heard clearly in the little chapel. At the height of one great squall all the rushlights went out, and it was impossible to read the hymn-book. In those days this did not matter overmuch as very few of the parishioners could read or possessed a hymn-book, relying on the minister to give out a line or two at a time. But with the chapel in complete darkness even the minister was at a loss, and for a time he and the congregation listened in silence to the thunder of the surf pounding on the rocky shore. Then, sonorously and in an inspired tone, the minister gave his hearers a new hymn, line by line:

*Mae'r iachawduriaeth fel y môr,  
Yn chwyddo byth i'r lan;*

## THE PORTRAIT

*Mae ynddi ddigon, digon byth,  
I'r truan ac i'r gwan.*

It is almost a sacrilege for me to attempt to translate this, but very crudely what the great hymnologist composed on the spur of the moment can be rendered into English as follows:

Salvation vast is as the sea,  
That surges on the shore;  
The halt, the poor, all in it find,  
An endless, endless store.

Try to picture that being intoned *in the dark* to the accompaniment of the roar of the gale-lashed sea!

Next to playing jokes and doing crossword puzzles my mother was very fond of a game of bridge, although she was not much good at it. Once, at Brynawelon, she was called out of the room to answer the telephone as a hand was being dealt. We decided to give her a cooked-up hand with all four aces, kings and queens. On her return she picked up her hand and sorted the cards. Not a muscle moved in her face.

"Come on," she said, "whose call is it?"

I have already described the Golden Wedding party which Winston Churchill gave my parents at Cannes, but I neglected to mention a remarkable incident preceding that anniversary gala. Several of us had dropped in at the Casino to have a flutter at roulette. The salon was packed to suffocation. After a half-hour or so I saw to my utter astonishment my mother elbowing her way through the crowd about the table where I was seated. To the best of my knowledge it was the one and only time she ever entered a gambling saloon. Naturally I got to my feet and gave her my chair. At the same moment I caught a glimpse of a huge cigar, and behind it the Churchill face. So I made my way to his side, and together we adjourned to the bar for a drink.

On my return to my mother a few minutes later my wife, who had been sitting beside me, glanced at me and shook her head sadly.

"Out of the first six spins of the wheel after *Mamie* took your seat," she said, "the ball landed in the 35 slot four times!"

The point of that remark is that I had been playing 35 for a solid hour without one win!

I do not recall which one of my mother's host of friends it was who once, at the end of a stay at Brynawelon, summed up the place my mother occupied in the hearts of her countrymen as follows:

"There have, of course, been Princesses of Wales. Queen Elizabeth of the sixteenth century, being a Tudor, was indisputably a Welsh Queen. But she is definitely the first Queen of Wales."

In almost the last conversation I ever had with her she reverted to a favourite topic—her grandfather, William Jones, Tyddyn Mawr. A dapper, smart, quick-moving little man, he wore, as I have told you, knee-breeches and shoes with silver buckles on Sundays. On weekdays he carried a shepherd's crook, the first use he made of which each morning was to whack it against the ceiling to rouse his son, William, and get him out of bed.

One of the last of the many merry parties abroad in which my mother was the chief merry-maker took us to Italy. When our ship arrived at Naples poor old Tom (Sir Thomas Carey Evans) was told off by my mother to look after the transfer of our luggage from ship to train. By the time this was done Tom found himself faced with a staggering bill running into hundreds and hundreds of lire, considerably more than he had in Italian currency. When the small army of brigands acting as porters began to be ugly, my mother stepped into the breach. Producing a 25-lire note from her bag she handed it to the chief brigand with a crisp announcement that this, plus what Tom had already paid, was all they'd get! And that was the end of that hold-up!

A premonition of impending trouble was all that prevented our breaking up a concert in the hotel at Syracuse. (It was I who sensed the likelihood of a scene.) Of course, the hotel manager insisted on putting our party in the front row, but I decided to take a strategic position further back. Well, hardly had we taken our seats when on to the platform came the weirdest-looking man I ever saw. His face was hidden beneath an enormous black beard, and under his arm he carried a thing that looked like a Red Indian canoe! Either as a spectator or a performer he was quite the most comical sight imaginable. I knew when my mother espied him she would explode with laughter, and I was already at bursting point. Sure enough, a moment later I heard my mother make a sudden exclamation, and then half choking with laughter she addressed me over her shoulder:



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SNOWDON, FROM CAPEL CURIG



## THE PORTRAIT

*"Dos allan, yr hen ffwl!"* she said *sotto voce*.

Of course, neither he nor the audience knew what she meant, but I did. "Get out, you old fool!" was the English for it—and before she could add anything further, out I went!

\* \* \* \*

Back in Criccieth in the late autumn of 1940 my mother left Brynawelon one afternoon to have tea at my Uncle William George's house. She was very fond of his wife, whose fatal collapse in church I have earlier described, in spite of her dislike of unpunctual people. In point of fact it was my aunt's amazing disregard of time that largely accounted for my mother's preferring to go to her rather than have her come to Brynawelon. That way the appointment would at least be kept!

They lived in Garthcelyn, an imposing house set in beautifully kept grounds. Amongst its many modern features was the parquet flooring in the main reception-rooms, necessitating the use of Oriental rugs instead of the usual carpets. And my aunt, as ardent a believer in the spit-and-polish school as any old-time sergeant-major, saw to it that these parquet floors were waxed and polished daily.

So my mother, tripping over a rug, slipped on the polished floor and crashed heavily on to it. As bad luck would have it, my mother's physician was off in the country somewhere, attending a patient, and my mother insisted on being taken to Portmadoc to have her hip X-rayed. For whatever reason, there was no ambulance available, but my mother gritted her teeth and insisted on making the four-mile journey in her own car.

Eventually, back in Brynawelon, she was put to bed. As quickly as they could get to her, Olwen and Megan came down from London. Naturally we all realized that such an accident, considering her age, was serious, but I am sure none of us had the faintest suspicion that the result of it would be fatal. Everything that could be done by way of nursing and medical attendance was done, of course, but as the days lengthened into weeks and she was still bedridden it began to be evident that she would never recover. On the other hand, her unflagging high spirits and the absence of any alarming symptoms deceived us into thinking she might be spared to us for a long time.



be strong again.  
He has grown a beard  
& looks like his father.  
Well I am still in bed  
5 weeks today. The fond  
there was another crack  
higher up in the bone  
so that it aches longer.  
"Called ~~it~~ any one d  
e phery faith wait  
easy to say but hard  
to carry out."

With my love to you  
both I am ever loving  
Mamie —

#### LAST LETTER THE AUTHOR RECEIVED FROM HIS MOTHER

This letter is in many ways very characteristic of my mother. It was written with pen and ink in bed, she never used a fountain-pen; she had already been bedridden for some weeks and was within three weeks of her death. As usual, she is more concerned about others than about herself; the verse from the Bible which she quotes is James i, 4th verse, and her following remark is very typical of her. Also she writes on the last day of the old year without wishing me a Happy New one.



But finally our family doctor detected signs that told him the end was near, and urgent messages were sent to my father and my brother and me to come to Criccieth without delay. My two sisters, having also been warned of the imminence of death, did their best to hide their grief as they fussed over the still cheery, animated sufferer. The last night, when together they took more than usual pains in brushing her hair and making her comfortable, she eyed them with a roguish look.

"Whatever are you two girls up to?" she demanded, in Welsh. "Anyone would think I was going to die." And she laughed at her own macabre jest!

Gwilym and I made the journey from London without undue difficulty, although the train service throughout the country was badly thrown out of gear by one of the most terrific snowstorms within living memory. But my father, thinking it would save precious hours, had decided to motor from Churt. It was one of the few great mistakes he ever made, and the result very nearly killed him!

In the middle of the night, while still fifty miles from Criccieth, his car became stuck in a snow-drift. Further progress was impossible. By rare good luck there was an inn not far distant, and to this providential shelter Dyer managed to guide his grief-stricken master. Here food and a warm bed were provided for him, but he was agonized by fears that the delay would prevent his reaching my mother before she passed away.

Word of my father's presence in the inn was flashed about the countryside, and with the first light of dawn a regiment of troops, quartered in the neighbourhood, were attacking the snow-drift under which the car was buried. By a prodigious amount of work the road was made passable, but precious time had been lost. He heard the news of her death and met my brother and myself at Corwen, and eventually arrived by rail at Criccieth and a sadly changed Brynawelon.

So my mother left us.

## PART THREE: THE GARDEN

### CHAPTER I

*Ysgafn y daeth,  
Ysgafn yr aeth.*

'Twas lightly sent;  
It lightly went.

BETWEEN 1889 and 1896 the first four of us children—Mair, Olwen and Gwilym following me in that order—arrived on the scene. Before we were in our teens we had developed into a trio of hooligans and one saint. For downright cussedness Olwen and Gwilym pressed my leadership as hard as ever they could, but gentle, dear little Mair was a being apart. Whereas we three were up to more mischief than a handful of monkeys from the time we opened our eyes until we fell asleep at night, Mair never gave my mother one moment of anxiety or trouble.

In this connection it may be of interest to describe how we children addressed one another. In English there is no equivalent for the Welsh *chdi* and *chi*. Roughly, but not exactly, a comparison can be made with the French *tu* and *vous*, and the German *du* and *sie*. As the eldest I was addressed by the others as *chi*, the polite and respectful second person plural. Similarly Olwen and Gwilym addressed Mair as *chi*. And Gwilym had equally to give the formal *chi* to Olwen. To me they all were inferiors, rating only *chdi*. And *chdi* was all that Olwen and Gwilym got from Mair. Poor old Gwilym was the goat, being *chdi* to all of us!

I have already mentioned the tragedy of the cruelly early death of Mair Eluned, in November 1907. Had she lived I am sure (and I know my mother was equally convinced) that she would have outshone us all in her accomplishments as well as in her saintliness. For she was always at the head of her class at school, and most proficient in music and the arts generally. I was only eighteen when an unsuccessful operation for appendicitis cut short the lovely child's brilliant career. To me, and to the still younger children, it was tragic enough, but none of us was old enough to realize what a terrible blow it was to our parents. Actually it crushed my father, and there is no question that his grief was far more poignant than my mother's. This was not at all because she had loved Mair less than he, nor because she was less desolated

Although we were all getting on towards the adolescent stage when Megan appeared on the scene in 1903, and although she never really figured in the scrapes that Olwen and Gwilym and I were for ever getting into, she was in some respects the most striking personality under the family roof. In the first place, she quickly proved to be a reincarnation of her maternal grandmother, uncannily true to type. Qualities inherited from countless ancestors on that side of the family tree were (and are) much in evidence in this sister of mine. Mentally agile, highly intelligent, quick, dapper, and, when perplexed, with a curious habit of pursing her lips, Megan *is* my grandmother reborn.

She loves gardening almost as much as my mother did, and between them they made the grounds at Brynawelon a veritable all-the-year-round flower show. Olwen and Gwilym and I—and my father—found it advisable to be away from home when the time came for the arrival by post of the annual seed catalogues from Sutton's, Ryder's, Dickson's and dozens of other nurserymen. Chairs and tables were piled high with them, and for days on end my mother and Megan lived with their noses buried in the books, laughing and battling alternately as each tried to convince the other that they simply must order some especial variety of rose or chrysanthemum.

Megan is a prodigious worker in the interests of her Anglesey constituents. Time and again I have watched her buttonhole an influential member, and to him lay down the law with all the gusto and incisiveness that characterized my grandmother's domination of her husband.

In point of fact, my grandmother once did precisely the same thing. It was following the death of my grandfather that my mother persuaded her to come and stay with us in London. By way of entertaining her my father took her to the House one day, and saw her to a seat in the Ladies' Gallery. But did she stay there? Not she! The next thing my father knew she was down in the public lobby, talking her head off to a Welsh M.P. And what she had to say to that most unhappy gentleman fairly staggered him. Only my father's intervening spared him from a further lambasting.

And now we come to my mother's sixth child.

One week-end when we were all together in London my mother arranged in advance how we were to be seated in the pew in

Castle Street. She could count on good behaviour from Olwen and Gwilym, so they could sit next to her. But I must be separated from them—on the far side of my father, whose job it would be to see I got up to no monkey-tricks during the service. All went decorously and well for a bit, but presently the minister, after a few opening phrases, choked, and gulped and gulped from the carafe of water placed in the pulpit. By this time I was helpless; my mother thought, "Oh, Dick will be all right, sitting next to his father," when to her amazement my father came out with a hearty laugh—no attempt at concealment or disguise! It was the best thing possible, it relieved the tension and the minister joined in with a merry grin.

The point is that far from acting as a squelcher my father was every whit as much a boy as I myself!

And then there was the famous occasion when my father and mother strove to outdo one another in the matter of romancing—a game she used to play with all of us children. It was an exceptionally clear day, not a cloud in the sky and visibility at its maximum. My mother and father were seated in the sun-parlour at Brynawelon, resting after the midday meal. Suddenly my mother sat bolt upright and pointed in the direction of the dancing waters of the bay far below.

"My goodness!" she said. "I can see St. David's Head!"

Actually this westernmost promontory of Wales is about eighty miles distant from Criccieth and very rarely seen from Brynawelon. But my father realized that this was the opening gambit. As usual, he was quite ready to fall in with her wishes and play his part. So up he got and went into the house to procure his binoculars. Armed with these he came back to the sun-parlour and took up his position at the open door.

"Yes, you're right, Maggie," he said, squinting through the glass. "That's St. David's Head, sure enough."

"Of course it is," said my mother. "But I can see it with my naked eyes."

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Anything more far-fetched than this would seem impossible to conjure up—although the fact that St. David's Head is in Pembrokeshire, the constituency which Gwilym represents in Parliament, made the fabrication less ridiculous than it would have otherwise

by a feeling of irretrievable loss. It was merely that my mother shared Mair's sublime faith in the goodness of God.

Almost from the start (April 3, 1892) Olwen was what you might call a tough guy. She was (and is) the only one of the children who could really put the fear of God into me. When she was aroused to anger her blazing eyes and astonishing stutter (a defect which she completely mastered in later years) were enough to strike terror in the stoutest of hearts. She attended the same school as Mair and did quite well at the Clapham High School.

After a period at Roedean, however, my mother decided to give Olwen the benefit of a European education, and hit upon Dresden. When the time came for Olwen to make the journey to Germany my mother insisted on taking me along. The reason for including me in the party was not apparent at first, but presently I was to discover it. It was nothing more nor less than her softness of heart. The morning after our arrival at the hotel in Dresden, when the time came for Olwen to present herself at the new school, my mother surprised us by refusing to go with her. It was I who must accompany my sister to those grim portals, sparing my mother the pain of a tearful farewell. Of course, this was the sole reason for my having been taken on the trip. It was characteristic of my mother to go to any lengths to avoid even little unhappy moments.

On our return *via* Strasbourg, where we spent a night in an old hotel, we had our first experience of Continental feather-beds—and how we laughed over breakfast as we told each other what we thought of them. Our next stop was Paris, which we reached just as a general strike broke out on all the railways in France. During the several days while the whole of the French transportation system was paralysed we perforce remained in Paris, the first time either of us had ever visited the gay city. The way that strike was eventually broken amazed my mother and me, the method employed being impossible in our own country. It was nothing less than a general mobilization of the whole French army. The railwaymen—like every other male of military age in France—having thus been called to the colours, were soldiers now. And as soldiers they had to obey orders and run the trains. So, after a most trying journey *via* Calais and Dover, we finally reached home.

Olwen remained in school in Dresden for two or three years. Soon after the outbreak of war she married Sir Thomas Carey Evans, then a brilliant young surgeon in the Indian Medical Service and destined later to become surgeon to the Viceroy, Lord Reading. The marriage has been a most happy one. They have four children, two boys and two girls, of whom my mother was very proud. Marriage and motherhood, like the advancing years, have not changed Olwen a bit. When she thinks the occasion warrants it she still tells us where we get off—in no uncertain terms.

Gwilym's birth (December 4, 1896) I have earlier referred to as having filled me with bewilderment—because of the speed of the spread of the news in Criccieth. On my way home from school at lunch-time I was stopped by the old lady and asked how I felt about having a little brother. By the time I reached home I was utterly bemused. Never in my young life was I so pleased to see my placid, down-to-earth grandfather. And, of course, that imperturbable giant speedily resolved the mystery, and put me right. It was quite true, and quite in order. In a room upstairs were my mother and a new-born infant, and everything was well with both of them.

Excepting only Mair, this young brother of mine was the best-behaved baby of my mother's brood. During his boyhood, and afterwards, he gave my mother very little trouble. Like our grandfather, he was slow to anger, but when he reached bursting point he let fly—and the provoker of his wrath never failed to rue it. His first schooling was in London when we were living in Wandsworth, and from the start he was popular with all his schoolmates, even thus early giving evidence of the qualities which since have made him one of the best-liked M.P.s who ever rose to Ministerial rank.

After she became Lady Carey Evans, and in spite of the responsibilities of mothering her four children, Olwen devoted much of her time to social welfare and charitable work generally. To make it easier for her to get about on her errands of mercy I let her have my motor-car when I went to France in 1915. Now this car was a Vulcan of very ancient vintage. Its chief characteristic was to come to a full stop at the most awkward times. It was this car that back-fired when my mother tried to crank it—resulting in her breaking her arm, as earlier described.

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been—but my mother wasn't going to be done down in this fashion. Jumping to her feet and waving aside the glass which my father held out to her, she shaded her eyes with her hand and gazed through the doorway.

"Why, of course it's Gwilym," she said. "But dear me, one of his fly-buttons is undone!"

This was too much for my father!

By the way, there is an interesting story attached to those Zeiss glasses. The Germans were attacking Verdun heavily when the French made a most surprising counter-attack which they carried through with even more than their customary *élan*. The Crown Prince was very nearly captured but got away *with* the skin of his teeth but *without* his binoculars. The officer who got them gave them to General Foch, who eventually presented them to my father. They are a very powerful pair.

You see, my mother played games with him just as she did with all her children, except that in his case she had no objection to introducing a spot of Robey-esque vulgarity.

In another mood she frightened him no less than she did us. To be called to account by her was enough to scare anybody, and my father got it when it was coming to him just as all of us did. Incidentally, we were not the only ones she had on the carpet.

I was too young at the time (a luncheon-party on my eighth birthday) to appreciate it, but it was marked by another instance of my mother's knowing her husband was at heart just as much a boy as I was. He made a big to-do about the party, having got a table for three at Gatti's in advance, and enjoyed himself hugely as host. My only contribution to the gaiety of that party, as far as I can remember, was a remark I made when my father was persuading my mother to have a glass of wine to drink my health. He remarked that surely Jesus Christ Himself would wish the water turned into wine on such an occasion. "*Dach chi yn meddwl y b'asa fo yn medru gwneyd ginger beer, Tada?*" Anyway, the hint was taken and, amidst laughter, put into action forthwith. Midway through the elaborate meal he put a question to me that was an embarrassing poser. Which would I rather see that afternoon, Barnum and Bailey's Circus at Olympia or Sir Henry Irving in Shakespeare at His Majesty's Theatre? Instinctively I knew that I *ought* to prefer the great English actor to the American circus, but the lure of the latter was too much for an eight-year-

old to resist. So off went the three of us to see "The Greatest Show On Earth." Many times in later years my mother told that story as all-conclusive evidence of *my father's* preferring the Circus to Irving. Incidentally, it was my only chance of seeing Irving and Ellen Terry.

On down through the years until I was a grown man, my father gave evidence in many ways of feeling on an age-level with me, and of being in my mother's eyes quite as much a child as the rest of us.

The point I hope to make in these concluding pages is summed up in the title I have chosen for them. For surely a garden is primarily a place of living things, and it is my contention that in her children my mother still lives. Nor is this all.

Dear old Sarah, the little Welsh lady who has been in service with us for more than fifty years, now runs Brynawelon for Megan, who inherited the homestead. And she runs it *precisely the way my mother would have it run!* Naturally none of us—including Megan—would have it otherwise, but it would make no difference to Sarah if an objection were raised. Her stand that this is the way Dame Margaret would have had any given thing done would be unassailable. So Sarah and Roberts could make fun of my catch of tiny trout—by serving them on the enormous platter—and so the two of them can do anything that all of us know my mother would do in the same circumstances. And this also serves to make her still very much alive.

## CHAPTER II

*Tri chyflwr hanfod bywedigion:*

*cyflwr abred yn annwn;*

*cyflwr rhyddid yn ryndawd;*

*a chyflwr cariad sef gwynfyd yn y nef.*

Three forms to living things are given:

• Dim rudiment within the deeps;

The human shape which freedom keeps;

Love and felicity in heaven.

BARDIC.

OPULENT as my mother was in that she had the love of a greater number of people than any other woman of whom I have ever heard, she was at the same time the most lavish giver of love I ever knew. Also, to a greater degree than anyone within my ken, she influenced all who came in contact with her. Add to this unusual trait the effect on her offspring of heredity—and in each one of us children there are innate qualities patently inherited from her—and you can see why I harp on the irrefutable fact that in us she still lives. But, you may say, this is at best ephemeral. Her children, and those others whom she influenced, will eventually go to their graves. Even so, and risking a charge of wishful thinking, I am convinced my mother will go on living as long as Wales itself. And this conviction is not based on mere opinion; it has a solid foundation in fact. That fact is the presence on the scene of her eight grandchildren, five boys and three girls—in each of whom my mother lives again, in some characteristic or other.

She was immensely fond of all of them, and they in turn thought there was no one in the world like *Nain*. Incidentally, this Welsh word for grandmother is curiously applied. Immediately I was born, for instance, my grandfather and my mother ceased to address my grandmother as *Mam*. From that moment she was *Nain*. Similarly, when I became a proud father my mother became *Nain*. If by long habit I continued to address her as *Mamie bach*, it was doubtless due to my having become Anglicized. Generally, in Wales, children call their parents grandparents the moment they arrive at this estate. The wife addresses and refers to her husband as grandfather, and he speaks of and to her as grandmother. Into this Welsh custom I read the pride and joy that follow the coming of a new generation.

So *Mam* (Mother) becomes *Nain*, while *Tad* (Father) becomes

## THE GARDEN

*Taid* (Grandfather). Incidentally, Mummy in Welsh is *Mamie*, while Daddy is *Tada*.

Reverting to her curious lack of interest in the war (to which I have already referred), it cannot be explained by the fact that this time Gwilym and I are not active combatants. In our stead stand her five grandsons, for whose well-being my mother was as prayerful as she had ever been for her sons. No, there was no explaining it on those grounds. She loved her grandsons with all her heart.

There was, in fact, something mysterious about her apathy. I recall vividly the day she suddenly, and for no apparent reason, expressed her hatred of the mere sight of the German 5.9 gun that had been an ornamental trophy in the garden outside her drawing-room window for almost a quarter of a century. She ordered its removal and conversion into scrap. But except for that one outburst she maintained a strange silence when all the rest of us were talking of the war.

\* \* \* \*

It was my father's wish, which we all shared, that my mother should have a *cynhebrwng bach* (little or private funeral) and not a *cynhebrwng mawr* (big or public funeral). This meant, as I have earlier explained, that there would be no women at the graveside. It mattered not, so far as my sisters were concerned. They had been with her when she breathed her last, and had no wish to be present at the interment. They knew, as we all did, that my mother would have insisted (could she have spoken) that there be no "fuss" about her burial. But, not unnaturally, Criccieth and, indeed, all Wales had other views. In the minds of the thousands of Welsh folk who loved her, a little funeral for Dame Margaret was unthinkable.

On my arrival at Brynawelon my chief concern, most mundane in the circumstances, had to do with food. I knew the house would be overflowing with relatives and intimate friends; such an influx with rationing in full force might well create serious difficulties in the three days' interval between my mother's death and her funeral on January 23, 1941. So as soon as I entered the house I made my way to the kitchen to ask faithful old Sarah how she proposed to feed us all.

"Major Richard," she said, "come here, and I'll show you something." She led the way to the pantry as she spoke.

Never, not even in peacetime, have I seen such an amazing array of foodstuffs. There were joints of beef and mutton, sides of bacon and hams, whole cheeses, cases of all kinds of tinned meats and vegetables—enough to stock a butcher's shop and a grocery. Everybody in Criccieth, in Eifionydd it seemed, had foreseen the probability of our being short of food, and rationing regulations were temporarily forgotten. Not only was the pantry packed from floor to ceiling with these gifts, our big ice-box which Roberts next showed me was filled with packets of butter and bottles of milk.

What touched me most was the gift of one of Criccieth's chemist's shops—*several cartons of toilet soap!* Until Roberts pointed them out to me I had forgotten that soap also required coupons. Surely this was the acme of thoughtfulness.

Hardly less astonishing was the quantity of flowers that came to Brynawelon during those three days. Within twenty-four hours these floral set pieces had filled every square foot of free space in front of the house, and at minute intervals throughout the second and third days messengers arrived with more. All we could do was to place them in the snow outside the sun-parlour—a great blanket of the most beautiful flowers I ever saw. And all this in January, with snow-drifts ten feet high—and with Britain's chances in the war at low ebb.

The more I think about that floral display the more I marvel. Wartime restrictions on passenger and goods traffic on the railways would have seemed enough to make impossible the shipment of so many thousands of wreaths, fully one-half of them coming all the way from London. But apparently everyone concerned gave them priority, and no one was prouder than the station-master at Criccieth as he assured me afterwards that not one flower had gone astray, or failed to be delivered at Brynawelon before the funeral.

Of course, the little post office was swamped by a veritable deluge of telegrams and cables from all parts of the world. From the King and Queen, from miner's hearth and peasant's kitchen, came sympathy. Amongst the many thousands of such messages which reached my father within hours of the announcement of my mother's death were cabled condolences

from his erstwhile pupil, the Duke of Windsor, and his Duchess. From an even more distant place came a sympathetic message from his (and my mother's) great friend, General Smuts. Winston Churchill's deep sense of loss was beautifully mirrored in his telegram, and the great mass of roses which subsequently came from him proved how well he remembered my mother's favourite flower. President Roosevelt sent my father a message of deep sympathy—although the two had never met.

But the marvel of the overflowing larder and the exquisite floral gifts seemed to me less extraordinary than the sudden change in the weather during the night before the funeral. As a native of Criccieth I had thought I knew all there was to know about the vagaries of the Caernarvonshire climate—vagaries which teach us in our childhood to expect the unexpected. But on this occasion it was the impossible that happened.

For days low-lying, leaden, snow-filled clouds had hidden even the relatively small hilltops surrounding Brynawelon. Nor was this a local condition; all of Britain had been for days in the grip of one of the most protracted and severe blizzards of all time. You can imagine, then, how difficult I found it to believe the evidence of my eyes when, on awakening on the day of the funeral, I saw the sun blazing down out of a cloudless sky. The slopes of the Merionethshire mountains across the bay—covered with great snow-drifts—were dazzlingly brilliant as they reflected the sun's rays. Irreverent as it undoubtedly was, I could not help recalling that game my mother played with my father when they fibbed to one another about being able to see Gwilym on St. David's Head. In point of fact, although of course there was no scientific instrument available to prove it, the visibility that morning was greater than could be recalled by the oldest inhabitant. Nor was this the end of the miracle.

Anyone who knows Snowdonia will tell you that a gorgeous sunrise and a cloudless sky are very often harbingers of dirty weather before the day is out. Indeed, this is about the only weather forecast you can make with any degree of certainty. So that magnificent sunrise not unnaturally depressed me. I foresaw the interment taking place during a return of the blizzard. But nothing of the sort happened. All through the day the sky remained cloudless, the whole countryside bathed in the splendour of the radiant sun.

So all day long the mourners—natives and strangers alike—could feast their eyes on a view such as my mother loved above almost anything else in the world!

But clear skies and brilliant sunshine in themselves were not enough to ensure the successful transporting of the coffin from Brynawelon to the Criccieth public cemetery, where it was to be placed in the family vault beside Mair. It must be borne in mind that for weeks snow-storms had been raging in North Wales, roads buried under deeper drifts than had ever been known. To convey the coffin down the hill from Brynawelon to the *Maes*, and from there up the steep grade to the cemetery, created what at first seemed an unsolvable problem. For my father was insistent that the coffin should be carried to the grave on an old heavy farm wagon—the one vehicle we all knew she would have wished to be used for this purpose. Obviously, to make the roads passable for such an unwieldy big cart entailed a prodigious amount of clearing of the ten-foot-high snow-drifts over the mile-and-a-half length of the funeral route.

Again the impossible was made possible. Hundreds of volunteers of both sexes turned out, tackling the drifts in parties working in relays, and by keeping at it night and day for the three days they managed to dig a cutting through the drifts wide enough to take the lumbering old farm wagon.

Instead of horses, the Home Guard, numbering a hundred, pulled the cart to and from the cemetery. On the down grade sixty of them held tight to the ropes attached to the rear of the wagon. When they came to the long, uphill pull from the Memorial Hall to the cemetery these human brakes joined their colleagues in front, and helped to pull the heavy vehicle up the sharp, icy grade.

With my father, Gwilym and my uncle on that drive behind the wagon from Brynawelon to the cemetery I found myself thinking of many disconnected things. Chiefly I was sorry my mother was not at my side—to exclaim joyously over the loveliness of the day, the miracle of those beautiful flowers when the countryside was buried deep in snow, the smartness of the military bearing of the hundred Home Guardsmen, most of them old sweats of the other war. But uppermost in my mind was anxiety lest the ordeal be too much for my father. He had passed his seventy-eighth birthday by three days when news of my mother's death reached

him—stuck fast in the snow-drifts—and for a man of that great age the results of such a shock might well prove fatal. But he went through with it without so much as faltering.

War censorship prevented the newspapers from mentioning that tremendous blizzard at the time, and for security reasons the place where my father's car became buried in the drifts could not be named. But now it is permissible to say it was the little Denbighshire mountain village of Cerrig-y-Drudion. Digging out the car, and clearing the worst of the drifts from this village to Corwen, kept the regiment of soldiers, assisted by local farmers, hard at it all night and more than half the next day. But at two o'clock in the afternoon of January 21st my father was able to resume his journey. At Corwen he met the London train for Barmouth and Criccieth. Gwilym and myself with our wives and his principal secretary, A. J. Sylvester, had travelled from London on the same train.

My father was not the only one to be frustrated by the blizzard in his attempt to reach my mother's bedside before the end. Lord Dawson of Penn, summoned from London when our family physician admitted there was nothing more he could do to stave off the inevitable, failed to reach Brynawelon.

Naturally my mother's death was followed by much eulogizing of her character in the British Press generally. Of the many hundreds of columns of praise it is difficult to point to any especial one as being most to my liking. In fact, most of the printed tributes hit the nail on the head by stressing the fact that she had been called upon to give up the assured life of the Caernarvonshire countryside and go to London to live in rooms in the Temple. Not quite so significant in its implications (nor altogether accurate) was another generally published statement that my mother's many quiet but useful activities during the 1914-18 war well earned for her the distinction of being one of the first recipients of the Grand Cross of the British Empire. If this were not entirely the reason for this honour being given to her, it was none the less a well-meant and much appreciated tribute. I especially liked one newspaper's reference to one of my mother's public statements:

“‘I am not a talker,’ she once said. ‘I leave that to other members of my family,’ alluding to the fact that her husband,



a son and a daughter were all Members of Parliament. But she was a quietly effective speaker, and was heard frequently on platforms throughout the country, Liverpool and North Wales particularly, usually speeches on behalf of causes near to her heart."

One other excerpt I feel should be added here. It had to do with a speech my father made in reply to a gathering of friends in Cardiff celebrating my parents' Golden Wedding anniversary:

"‘We have lived together in perfect harmony for fifty years,’ he said. Then he went on to sum up their characters in one of those humorous inversions dear to the Welsh mind. ‘One of us is contentious, combative, and stormy. That is my wife. Then there is the other partner, placid, calm, peaceful and patient. That is me.’”

To this day I can hear the peals of laughter with which my mother met that ridiculous statement. It was unquestionably his ability to make her laugh that so endeared my father to my mother.

### CHAPTER III

*Ni edrych angeu pwy decaf ei dalcen.*

Death has not a care,  
Whose forehead is fair.

REVERENCE for the dead may seem to have been lacking in the immediately preceding pages. And if reverence is truly expressed by wearing black and being generally mournful I must plead guilty to a charge of irreverence. To my mother's way of thinking (and it is an opinion to which I subscribe wholeheartedly), *mourning* over the death of a loved one is a denial of one's faith. Far from feeling, or expressing, sorrow, one must surely be happy to know their loved one has passed on into the spirit world, and so finished for all time with mundane ills and worries. And if ever a man or a woman proved on earth their rightful inheritance of all the glories of heaven it was my mother. Why, then, should I mourn for her?

In point of fact, her philosophy embraced a thought which to the best of my knowledge has never before been put in print. Her contention was that *death is the only universality*. (Birth is by no means universal; whether in the case of the human embryo, fish's roe, or an oak tree's acorns.) "Mind you," she used to say to me when sticking her hopeless-looking little sprigs into pots in the greenhouse in her own apparently haphazard way, "mind you, I do not say that *all* of these will live, but this I *do* know, some day they will all be *dead*." Now, since death alone is the great fact of life, *it must be good*. To think otherwise is to write yourself down a hopeless pessimist. Yet there are millions of devoutly religious people who find nothing incongruous in worshipping an all-wise, loving Father and at the same time viewing death as a tragedy.

My mother used to point out to me a little-appreciated proof of God's beneficence, proof repeated daily throughout our lives, and by the vast majority never recognized as the most wonderful of divine blessings. Of all the peoples of the earth, the only one which centuries ago comprehended the magnificence of this God-given boon was the "infidel" Chinese. They it was who conceived a more supreme form of punishment than mere execution. For the most heinous crimes the penalty was not death; it was—

*life without sleep!* The wretched culprit, imprisoned in a bamboo cage, had his fill of food and drink. But when he nodded, overcome with sleepiness, a guard tapped him gently on his head with a bamboo pole. When this no longer sufficed to keep him awake, other, more effective measures were brought into play. And it was never long before not only the condemned man, but also all those who witnessed his agony, came to a full realization of what sleep means to us. (Now that they are our brothers in arms, the irony of this has largely disappeared, but a few yesterdays ago you could not have affronted a Christian in a more deadly fashion than to tell him he was less appreciative of the goodness of God than the "heathen *Chinee*.")

"We take sleep for granted," my mother would say, "just as we take breathing for granted. But we shouldn't. Think of it! Every day of our life we *die*—only to rise again. Every day the lesson is there for us to learn and understand. Our whole life is a preparation for the final, earthly sleep. Surely, since awakening has always followed sleep, how can it be questioned that *when we are ready* for the life everlasting we shall again awake?"

This much I set forth here by way of explaining away the doubts of those who may have looked in vain for some expression of grief from me. It is not to be found because I did not—I do not—grieve for my mother. I miss her. I *missed* her the day I stood alone outside Buckingham Palace, watching my boy doing his first King's Guard before going overseas. How proud and rather tearful she would have been—another Owen doing his job in his quiet, efficient way; but to her what memories of her father and his kin—mental pictures of his dim ancestors guarding their little flocks against Saxon marauders on their mountain farms in Gwynedd.

Naturally I miss her. Could it restore her to me I would gladly make any sacrifice. But this is selfishness. She is far happier than any mortal, beset by earthbound cares and ills, can ever be. And I choose to believe heaven is a fairer, lovelier place now that she is there.

\* \* \* \*

Many gardens have somewhere in them a bit of "crazy" pavement; and it is meet that these concluding pages should follow that higgledy-piggledy pattern.

Of the many scores of tributes published immediately after my

mother's death I find especially gratifying the testimony of Clement Davies, K.C., M.P., a very old friend of mine.

"We in Wales knew David Lloyd George as the combative, stormy eagle of Snowdonia, and Dame Margaret the calm, patient, but withal strong and powerful personality worthy in every way of her mighty mate. She was more than the wife of a great man; she had a distinctive quality of her own—unobtrusive, never forcing its way to the forefront, but nevertheless there—sure, certain, reliable. It has been my good fortune to know them for over forty years—a period during which they passed through and knew every variety of public opinion from the execration of the Jingo mob of the Boer War to the adulation of the masses whom he led to victory in a greater war, a period which counted in it years of unremitting care, when the value of every penny had to be carefully weighed and assessed. Whatever were the changes, Dame Margaret never changed. Her friends of comparative obscurity were her friends in the hours of power and of triumph. Wales knew this, and Wales never changed in its affection, loyalty and devotion to her. She was the friend of all, and all were friends to her. It is difficult to think of her without the family, or of them without her, for she was the centre. Lloyd George and they gravitated towards and around Dame Margaret with a warmth and affection and a dependence that is indescribable. They knew that she was a tower of strength, a safe guardian, a doughty warrior to whom they could all turn in the hour of peril and of need, a safe harbour of refuge, however great the storm, a comforter in the hour of distress, and a healer of wounds however grievous. Dame Margaret was a great lady. I would prefer the Welsh word *boneddiges*. She was the embodiment of the best in Welsh culture. Though the public life of Lloyd George called for his presence in London for the main part of fifty years, English culture did not appeal to her. She remained throughout Welsh—pure Welsh, nobly, grandly and unaffectedly Welsh. We Welsh people knew it, and it partly accounts for the devotion and affection for her that is to be found in every Welsh home and in every heart in that home. She has left with all those privileged to know her memories whose fragrance we shall long cherish."

Another:

"... And she was still, after all those crowded and splendid years, an Eifionydd housewife with the dignity, wisdom, humour and kindness that are characteristic of so many Welsh women of farming stock. Welsh to the core, her speech and her thought were racy of her native soil, a district rich in tradition, in native culture, and in strong character. . . . She had never been dazzled, she had never lost her head, and for her there was always the age-old background of the Eifionydd life. That was her anchor in the storms and calms of fifty years of politics. . . . In her was a courage as great as that of her husband, and a courage that was, like his, shot with a gay humour . . . a great lady of the old Welsh stamp."

An additional sidelight on earlier references to my mother's disapproval of my father's choosing politics as a career is to be found in the course of another newspaper panegyric. The excerpt reads:

"At the time of their golden wedding Mr. Lloyd George recalled that there were tears from his wife when he plunged definitely and irrevocably into politics. 'Not hysterical tears,' he explained, 'for my wife has always been serene of temper and full of understanding, but tears of regret for the ending of her hopes for quiet, untroubled existence in the country.'"

For city-born folk to appreciate what Criccieth meant to my mother would take a more convincing pen than mine to make clear. All I can do is to recite an incident—typical of thousands of others that made life in her beloved birthplace so dear to her—which came to my ears for the first time during a recent visit to Criccieth. My informant (whom, perhaps, it is best to leave unnamed) is the manager of one of the town's several banks.

"As, of course, you know," he said, "our dealings with our depositors are, shall we say, less formal, more personal, than is possible in the case of a London branch. Even townspeople who have no account with my bank are at least well-known acquaintances. So naturally we come up against business problems with which the Metropolitan banker never has to grapple. One such instance will interest you because your mother was concerned in it.

"It was during the last year of your mother's life that David —, whose father and mother you know as well as I do, appeared in my office one day. He was still in his teens, not yet of military age, but he had already proved at school that he was a lad of brilliant promise. He had a big roll of blueprints covered with intricate drawings which he proceeded to show me. *On paper* he had what looked to be, even to my non-technical eyes, a revolutionary invention which would be of great value to the war effort. In his own boyish, forthright way he explained he wanted me to lend him enough money to transform the drawings into a practical model of the machine. His estimate of the sum required was £1500. I asked him what he had to offer by way of security. Quite unabashed he said he had nothing at all. Nor had he any idea where to turn to find anyone who would stand sponsor for him. When I explained that, great as my faith in him and in his invention was, I was bound by rigid rules and could not make an unsecured loan to anyone, he was naturally sunk in gloom.

"Supposing you go up to Brynawelon, and tell Dame Margaret all about it,' I suggested.

"Hardly were the words out of my mouth before the boy dashed out of my office, new hope shining in his eyes.

"In the afternoon my 'phone rang, and there was your mother on the other end of the wire. She would go security for the youngster. He got the necessary money, and his invention is now playing a really important part in winning the war. More important still, thanks to your mother, that boy's future is assured."

Doesn't this tell its own story? Can't you see why my mother loved Criccieth? Opportunities to do kindnesses like that just don't seem to occur in big cities. And without meaning to be trite, I know that boy's gratitude wasn't a bit more heartfelt than my mother's joy in being able (by a mere telephone call) to make his dreams come true.

\* \* \* \*

And now that this untidy, war-scarred book is drawing to its close, I find on re-reading the previous chapters that I have shirked one issue. I have quoted extensively from others, I have told anecdotes and repeated tales of hers—hoping thus to give a picture of my mother. But I have dodged the putting down on paper of my own portrait. It is a very difficult task for a son—it has been

done and done well—but I am not of that company. However, I am heartened by the knowledge that *she* at any rate would have smiled at what follows.

She was fundamentally a very religious and determined woman. Her shining faith and valour rode all storms. To her the tempest, whether at sea or in her own life, was something to be faced calmly and courageously—with infinite faith in her God. She never faltered. She was justly proud of her Welsh ancestry, and to her it was a tower of strength. She used to tell me that the old vines at Hampton Court had their roots in the Thames, she had her roots in Gwynedd, guarded by its bastions and nourished by its traditions.

She had the most determined and unshakable views on certain subjects. For instance, with her knowledge of Italy, Mussolini's early efforts found mild favour in her eyes. The castor-oil treatment rather appealed to her. They got going—building roads, draining swamps, running their casual trains a little better. She used to love to talk to me on these subjects, because she and I were closer to the earth than any of the others. But when the first signs of oppression appeared in Germany and Italy, together with the slaughter and ruthless persecution of the Jews, her attitude underwent a complete change. She knew immediately that war was inevitable. She had been fortunate in her contacts with Jewry. She had many good friends among the Jews, Rufus Isaacs (afterwards Lord Reading) in particular. Christ to her was first and foremost a Jew—*Nazaread o'r grôth* (Nazarene from the womb). To her he was *Iesu o Nazareth*; Bethlehem and all the conventional details of the Birth and the Kings from the East were all rather too sugary for her realistic mind. She never used strong language; even when most annoyed, *brenin mawr!* (great king!) was her favourite and limit, never *arglwydd mawr!* (great lord!)—which throws a curious sidelight on the way we regarded personalities in Wales: we had lords and princes in power over us, but never kings.

This easy tolerance of Jews was rendered largely possible by the presence amongst us of some very comic and Dickensian characters of Jewish persuasion in Eifionydd. I only wish I could translate her stories and my grandfather's stories about the Jews, but the idiom is too difficult. There existed a thorough appreciation of their hard-working methods—rewarded as they were by success

at fair and mart. They used to tour the difficult countryside with incredible loads. My grandmother's bargaining at the back door was something to hear to believe. First and foremost there was the language difficulty, and then there was *Nain's* nimble brain, always a length ahead of any Jew. My mother, when in Criccieth, was invariably in the background, ready to unravel some linguistic tangle. I may appear to overstress the belief in heredity and breeding, but it is strongly held in Wales. The tribes of Israel were humorously divided by their characteristics. My mother and I, for instance, were Benjamins—left-handed. Knowledge of the Bible and its humorous side, especially the old Testament, were stressed from the pulpit. Such men as Dafydd Evans, Ffynnonhenry were national characters. His description of Moses and the Israelites crossing the Red Sea is a Welsh classic—the dramatic finale being Miriam's famous soldier's farewell to Pharaoh and his chariots. Completely Rabelaisian—but how revealing; and all this, mind you, from the pulpit!

Nazism my mother abhorred; in fact, she wouldn't discuss it—it wasn't decent.

She had not much use for the French, although she regarded Brittany as a part of Wales. The sailor-onion-salesmen used to come over from St. Malo in their little schooners with their cry "*Wynwyns Mari bach!*"

She had no time for lazy farmers, and many an hour have I spent listening to her tirades. The Owens, I should imagine, had been for generations early-rising, conscientious workers. She could instinctively sense neglect as soon as she trod a field. The farmers were given lime gratis. She was all against it. They should work for it. Let them plough all that was available and suitable, then by all means give them all the lime and fertilizers they needed. Many and many a talk I had with her on the subject of work on a farm, but it was always the Owens she quoted as examples. I discreetly refrained from bringing up the methods of the Joneses—her mother's side. They prospered—but Providence undoubtedly had a large hand in it. The only examples I knew personally were my grandmother's brothers, William and Owen. There are two of them in the present generation. They toiled not neither did they spin, but they flourished. How they did it beats me, but they definitely had some magic tribal gift. William, Derwyn Fawr, as I have tried to indicate



in another chapter, was a character deserving of a book to himself. But you would need Thomas Hardy in his mellow, happy mood, Frank Norris, or a Welsh Dickens. We had one—Daniel Owen. William hated going to bed, and he disliked still more getting out of it. His sister used to tell me that since a small boy his first task in getting out of bed was to take a handful of rock salt, go down to the stream and scrub his teeth and gums. No toothbrush or accessories. He would be sixty-odd when I remember him first, although I take it he had passed his usual caustic comment on me before, and he had a set of teeth fit to tackle pickled pork. The dental routine was still in operation at Derwyn Fawr. Such was William Jones—you can see him in the House of Commons most days—reincarnated—though I doubt whether the Minister of Fuel takes a handful of salt to a sparkling brook every morning.

William's farm ran on oiled wheels, thanks largely to a very capable and charming wife. He had an unerring eye for man, woman and beast. My mother had that magic gift of inspiring happy, willing service. She was very tolerant, but never changed her mind about certain things—drink, religious hypocrisy, cosmetics, etc. My wife once spent a good hour making her up. She was quite pleased about it and looked lovely—but it was all off by bedtime and not repeated.

She was a firm Calvinistic Methodist, but saw good in all sects. My father's only sister, Mary, was a very able woman but very narrow-minded in religious matters. A very strict Baptist, she took a long time before she was satisfied that Maggie was good enough for Dei. She never tolerated my grandfather or grandmother, although of course she was always polite to them. But gradually she began to realize that Maggie was a personality to be reckoned with; and when we kids came along one after the other, Maggie was definitely someone. And did our aunt spoil us! Everything we wanted her lavish, generous hand gave us. She was a strong character, definitely uncompromising. She ruled her household well, with hospitality unbounded. Even Uncle Lloyd quailed. The old boy was very fond of pastries and they were bad for him. I have seen carefully planned attempts to manoeuvre an extra slice of apple pie on to his plate being nipped by a devastating counter-attack from the head of the table. Meanwhile I could stuff myself until I was sick and not a word said.

At the latter end she admired and loved the younger woman

very greatly. Maggie had definitely arrived. Four children, a dynamic husband forcing his unaided way up the political ladder by dint of exercising his power to focus his fellow-countrymen's attentions on the vital matter of the moment. His health was none too good in those days. He couldn't eat just anything. More worry for Maggie, and yet in her apparently haphazard, unperturbed way this household was run and run well. I was with my aunt and grandparents most of the first decade of the new century and could see it all from their angle. I was terribly spoilt, but luckily had the firm discipline of my Uncle Lloyd in matters scholastic. There he was adamant.

Incidentally, it may be of interest to others to record that I was sent from Portmadoc County School direct to Cambridge at seventeen. I was too young and unfledged to enter fully into the various activities of university life. A year as a learner in a good engineering works in England (because quite frankly my English was poor) would have made all the difference. My mother and I were always glad to drop into Welsh, it was like taking off a rather tight pair of boots.

Meanwhile Maggie was becoming a legend. It was a terrific event when she came down to Criccieth to have another baby. They were like a lot of bees fussing around, but the queen was quite unperturbed and the new arrival meant no more to her than did, say, Dic or Mair. Her love was steadfast and all-embracing.

In order to understand her and bring to mind a true picture of her as she was, one has to consider her religious faith and outlook, whereby she acquired her amazing courage, serenity and balance. She had complete and absolute faith and trust in her God. This all-powerful, all-seeing, everlasting Father was to her the same Being who had been the Counsellor, Protector and Guide to her ancestors for generations and centuries before the coming of Christ. She knew that her remote forbears had inhabited Eifionydd, her beloved corner of Gwynedd, long before the Romans came, and that her name, Owen, or Owain, was in use amongst her ancestors before Caesar ever saw Britain. They may have worshipped with different forms and ritual, but that worship was to the same God. They may have tendered their burnt offerings and sacrifices with weird rites under the oak and on their *cromlech*i, but it was to the same eternal God.

She would say that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did much the

same, and to the Welsh mind the God of the Old Testament is the one true, everlasting *Duw* we should trust and worship. Should trials and misfortunes come, should things happen to her and to those whom she loved, things that for the moment she could not fully comprehend, her steadfast faith and trust were never shaken. It *must* be in order, however cruel and useless and wasteful it might seem, God would not have decreed it otherwise.

Wars, cruelty, oppression, tragedy, wanton devastation, all these she saw around her in bewildering succession, but it never caused her faith to waver or doubt for an instant. She did her best to succour and comfort, but she never questioned the wisdom of an all-powerful Being who could sanction such trials. People speak of the *patience* of Job; it has never appeared to me that that is the quality to admire in the grand old character, rather his shining, undaunted courage, and his complete and absolute trust in his God.

My mother was in reality pre-Christian. It is very difficult for me, a Welshman, with a poor mastery over the English language, to portray adequately this great woman without being guilty of seeming irreverence. We in Wales have still a great deal of the pagan in us. Our *Eisteddfod* and *Gorsedd*, our belief in the *Tylwyth Teg*, our divisions of time, of the year, and the day and night, all date back to pre-Christian times. My mother was essentially *Welsh*, and her character and personality, her impish humour, her all-forgiving love, were handed down to her from remote ages.

*Y fraich fu'n hollti'r môr,  
Sy' 'nawr yn dal y gwan.*

C. E.

She was a very bad subject for a photographer. She could not be natural in front of the camera. The frontispiece is a good one of her. But more often than not she photographed badly, the only remedy being to catch her completely unawares. Her portraits, quite frankly, are very poor. And that is my difficulty; I can make some sort of a job of the background, but the central figure eludes you, it needs a surer and more skilful brush than mine. We must leave it at that. We all adored her. She will for ever remain a fragrant memory in her beloved Wales.

It is one of the main reasons for the survival of our little nation and its ancient tongue—we live so much in our past—that our future is assured.

I have made reference to my mother's visit to Washington, where she was the guest of President Coolidge. During her stay in the United States she met many outstanding personalities, world-famous men and women. She was also able on many occasions, both in New York and in other cities, to indulge in one of her favourite forms of relaxation—attending the theatre. On her return, she had some very shrewd and interesting comparisons and criticisms to offer.

In point of fact, she was always very fond of the theatre and its people. She had many good friends amongst stage folk. Sir Henry Irving and Ellen Terry were perhaps her first actor friends, but Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree and the ill-fated Robert Loraine were also frequent visitors in our various London homes.

Sir James Barrie was a dear friend too. It was to him my mother told the true story (completely unknown to the vast majority of English and Scottish people, and not too widely known in Wales itself) of how it came about that the Welsh national symbol was the humble leek. Incidentally, my mother used to say that *naïve curiosity* was more strongly developed in Barrie than even his better known quality of whimsy. My mother told me the tale this way:

“‘We in Scotland have the thistle,’ he said one day, ‘and the English have the rose. The Irish have the shamrock. These symbols I can understand; they make sense. But the leek. Why should Wales have *that* vegetable as its national symbol?’

“‘Primarily,’ I told him, ‘because of our national sense of humour.’

“And then I went on to explain that in *Welsh* the name for the leek and the name for the daffodil are almost identical; *cenin* are leeks, *cenin Pedr* (St. Peter's leeks) are daffodils. And in ancient times it was the daffodil that was our Welsh symbol.

“But along came Shakespeare with his *Henry V*, in which he made one of his few errors. By an understandable slip on the translator's part our daffodil became a leek—and so you find Shakespeare giving Fluellen the scene where he forces the empty braggart Pistol to eat the leek. From that day to this the world

at large has taken it for granted that it *is* the leek we Welsh of our own free choice made our national emblem.

"And those of us who knew better thought it was too good a joke to spoil—by proving even Shakespeare could and did indulge in a Homeric nod—and so we took what he had foisted upon us. Took it and had the fun of laughing in our sleeves."

There *is* Wales!

Only a Welshman knows how often his tongue is in his cheek—and even a Welshman can't be always sure when his fellow-countryman's is there!

So what could be more appropriate than to make the final pause in this "garden" at the spot where the crazy pavement is craziest? Close on fifty years ago she was insisting on all five of us wearing wool next to our skin, as I have told you.

It was the last day I ever saw my mother alive. We had been for a long motor-drive through the mountains, paying visits at outlying farmhouses, and I was returning to London in the morning. And now we were comfortably seated before a blazing fire in the living-room. She was reading her paper—suddenly, apropos of nothing:

"You know, Dick, I've been thinking for some time now—and I've come to the conclusion that all this talk about the virtues of wool next to the skin is nonsense."

If she had hit me over the head with the poker I could not have been more stunned.

"*Mamie bach,*" I exclaimed. "*Say that again!*"

"I'm quite sure," she replied demurely, "you all would have been quite as well off if you'd never worn woollen underwear."

Ye gods and little fishes! To think what my father and Olwen and I suffered—only at the end of half a century to discover it was just one of my mother's jokes!

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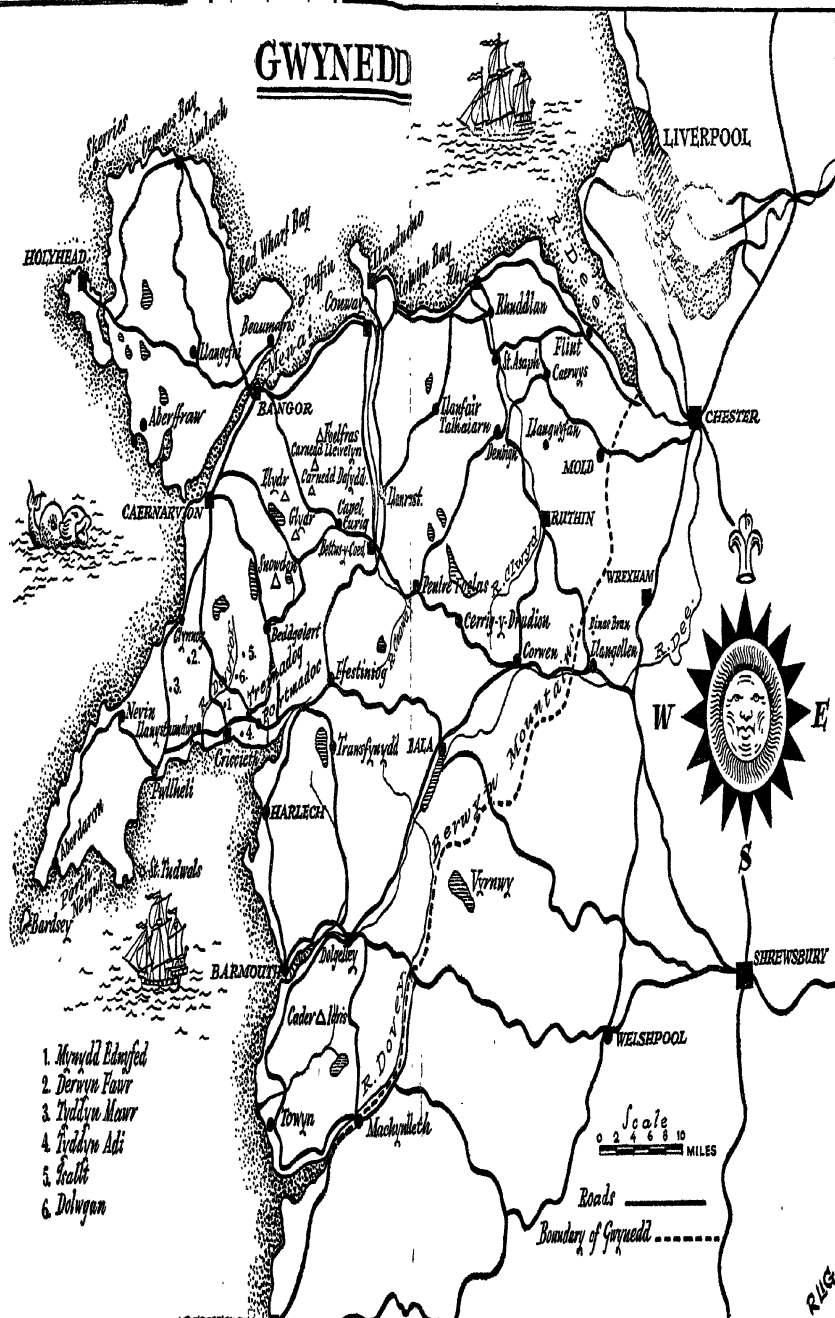
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